LEO STRAUSS

LECTURES ON HEGEL'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

A course offered in the autumn quarter, 1958

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Introduction to the Transcripts of Leo Strauss's Courses on Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, 1958 and 1965

Paul Franco

Leo Strauss offered a course on Hegel's *Philosophy of History* twice during his time at the University of Chicago, once in the Autumn quarter of 1958, and again in the Winter quarter of 1965. The transcripts of these courses follow. No audio tapes survive for the 1958 course, and therefore the transcript of it is in a somewhat fragmentary condition. The transcript of the 1965 course, for which audio tapes do survive, is relatively complete. In terms of theme and manner of treatment, the two courses are very similar. What differences there are between them arise from the fact that Strauss's remarks generally take off from the specific student paper that opens each class period and from the specific student questions that are raised during each class period.

It is fortunate that we have access to these courses. Hegel is one of the few great philosophers that Strauss did not write about at any length over the course of his career. There are, of course, numerous references to Hegel in Strauss's published writings, some of them quite intriguing. But more often than not, Hegel is treated as a domino in Strauss's schematic history of modern political philosophy and of the genesis of historicism. The courses he taught at the University of Chicago reflect a much deeper engagement with Hegel on Strauss's part, and one that is surprisingly sympathetic to the great nineteenth-century thinker.

Before taking up the content of these courses, I would like to briefly survey Strauss's engagement with Hegel in his published writings.[i] There are three principal contexts in which Hegel's name comes up in Strauss's writings: in connection with his studies of Hobbes in the 1930s; in his debate with Alexandre Kojève in *On Tyranny*; and in his account of the "three waves" of modern political philosophy. Let me begin with the Hobbes-Hegel connection.

During the 1930s, Strauss was deeply engaged in the study of Hobbes's political philosophy. This is evidenced not only in his 1936 book, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, but also in a number unpublished writings on Hobbes that have been printed in

[i] For accounts of Strauss's interpretation of Hegel, mainly as mediated by Kojève, see Sara MacDonald and Barry Craig, *Recovering Hegel from the Critique of Leo Strauss* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), chap. 1; Robert Pippin, "Being, Time, and Politics: The Strauss-Kojève Debate, *History and Theory* 32 (1992): 138-61. MacDonald and Craig refer to Strauss's lectures on Hegel but focus primarily on his published works. In "Kojève's Hegel, Hegel's Hegel, and Strauss's Hegel: A Middle Range Approach to the Debate about Tyranny and Totalitarianism," Waller Newell brings out the differences between Strauss's reading of Hegel and Kojève's; see *Philosophy, History, and Tyranny: Reexamining the Debate between Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève*, ed. Timothy Burns and Bryan-Paul Frost (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016), 237-44.

Strauss's *Gesammelte Schriften* and recently translated into English.[ii] As is well known, Strauss's interest in Hobbes stemmed from a desire to investigate the roots of modern political philosophy with a view to critiquing it and reopening the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns.[iii] As part of this investigation, Strauss seems to have envisaged writing a comparative study of Hobbes and Hegel.[iv] This intention received expression in a footnote in Strauss's Hobbes book, where he wrote: "M. Alexandre Kojevnikoff and the writer intend to undertake a detailed investigation of the connexion between Hobbes and Hegel."[v]

The context of this footnote is a comparison between Hobbes's principle of the fear of violent death and Hegel's account of the origin of self-consciousness in the master-slave dialectic. For Strauss, the fear of violent death in Hobbes plays the same foundational role with respect to modern moral and political philosophy that radical doubt in Descartes plays with respect to modern metaphysics. Like radical doubt, the fear of violent death springs from distrust of nature rather than grateful acceptance of it, and it leads to an effort to actively control nature rather than to mere contemplation of it. According to Strauss, Hegel agrees with Hobbes on this foundational point when he locates the origin of self-consciousness in the slave's fear of violent death in his life-and-death struggle with the master. For both Hobbes and Hegel, bourgeois morality is ultimately grounded in the vanity-liberating fear of violent death.[vi]

The other connection Strauss draws between Hegel and Hobbes relates to the latter's turn to history in his translation of Thucydides. This turn to history, Strauss claims, was motivated by Hobbes's interest in the application of moral precepts. Reason by itself is incapable of getting human beings to obey moral norms; historical examples are needed to make obedience easier. This same conviction of the impotence of reason and rejection of the morality of obedience ultimately underpin Hegel's philosophy of history, according to Strauss. From Hobbes to Hegel, the problem of applying moral norms and guaranteeing the actualization of the best regime becomes the focus of modern political philosophy.[vii]

As it turned out, Strauss and Kojève never wrote their projected comparative study of Hobbes and Hegel.[viii] They did, however, collaborate almost two decades after the

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[ii] See Leo Strauss, *Hobbes's Critique of Religion and Related Writings*, trans. and ed. Gabriel Bartlett and Svetozar Minkov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
[iii] See the final paragraph of Strauss's "Comments on Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen*," in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. E. M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965). See also *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, trans. E. M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), Preface and Introduction.
[iv] See Heinrich Meier's Introduction to *Hobbes's Critique of Religion*, 5; also Strauss's December 1933 letters to Gerhard Krüger, Jacob Klein, Karl Löwith, and Gershom Scholem, cited on 5n15.
[v] Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 58n1.
[vi] Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 56-58, 122-23. See also Strauss's letter to Hans-Georg Gadamer and Gerhard Krüger of 12 May 1935, in *Hobbes's Critique of Religion*, 159-63.
[vii] Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 93-94, 104-7, 130, 150-52.
[viii] Kojève did write a letter to Strauss on 2 November 1936 in which he thanked Strauss for his Hobbes book and offered some of his own views on the Hobbes-Hegel relationship; reprinted in

publication of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* on a book that allowed Strauss to engage more fully with Hegel's philosophy, or at least Kojève's idiosyncratic version of it. *On Tyranny* (1954) began life as a commentary by Strauss on Xenophon's short dialogue *Hiero*. Strauss used this dialogue to show how Xenophon employed a socially responsible rhetoric that allowed him to reveal certain truths to a small minority of philosophers while hiding them from the majority of ordinary citizens. This rhetoric, he said, was "based on the premise that there is a disproportion between the intransigent quest for truth and the requirements of society."[ix] This premise was also bound up with the purpose of the dialogue: to contrast two different ways of life, the political life and the philosophical life, and to show the superiority of the latter by pointing to the self-sufficiency of the wise man versus the political ruler's need for love.[x]

It is precisely this radical disjunction of philosophy and politics, theory and practice, that Kojève criticizes in his response to Strauss. The philosopher, he argues, plays a crucial role in positively influencing political reality and in bringing about the "universal and homogeneous state" that constitutes the Hegelian end or goal of history. Kojève rejects what he sees as Strauss's "Epicurean" idea of the philosophical life as isolated from society and devoted to the quest for purely theoretical truth. Such an idea rests on a "theistic" conception of Being as immutable and eternally identical to itself. This conception, however, goes out the window once one accepts Hegel's radically "atheistic" position that "Being itself is essentially temporal." Then the philosopher must flee the "isolation of the garden" and "participate in history" in order to reveal Being. The only way for him to establish his truths is through "social and historical verification." To retreat into solitude, as Strauss suggests, leads inevitably to solipsism.[xi]

In his response to Kojève, Strauss makes a number of revealing comments about Hegel. In the first place, he repeats the point he made in *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* that Hegel incorporates the modern rejection of the morality of obedience initiated by Hobbes: "Kojève's or Hegel's synthesis of classical and Biblical morality effects the miracle of producing an amazingly lax morality out of two moralities both of which make very strict demands on self-restraint." Doubting the efficacy of reason to bring about obedience to moral norms, Hegel continued and radicalized the "modern tradition that emancipated the passions." Strauss once again compares Hegel's teaching in the master-slave dialectic to Hobbes's doctrine of the state of nature. Though Hegel's teaching is certainly more sophisticated than Hobbes's, it still starts from the false Hobbesian assumption that "man as man is thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints or as a being that is guided by nothing but a desire for recognition."[xii]

Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, Revised and Expanded Edition, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 231-34.

[ix] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 26-27. Strauss first previewed these ideas on Xenophon's rhetoric in "The Spirit of Sparta and the Taste of Athens," *Social Research* 6 (1939): 502-36.

[x] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 78-79, 85-91.

[xi] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 147-69.

[xii] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 191-92. In his letter to Strauss of 19 September 1950, Kojève comments on this aspect of Strauss's argument: "You appeal to moral conscience to refute my criterion argument. But the one is as problematic as the other" (*On Tyranny*, 255). Similarly he writes on

The second fundamental point about Hegel—or Kojève's version of him—that Strauss makes in his response concerns the end or goal of history. Kojève famously describes this end in terms of the "universal and homogeneous state," that is, the non-national and classless state. Strauss wonders whether such a state, where no struggles remain and there is nothing left to do, does not rather resemble the state of Nietzsche's "last man" and point toward the destruction of humanity.[xiii] This is a criticism that Strauss comes back to again and again in his correspondence with Kojève,[xiv] and we will see it appear in his courses on Hegel as well. Kojève himself seems to concede this point to Strauss, and as time went by he described the end-state in ever more ironic, less utopian terms. Thus he writes to Strauss: "In the final state there naturally are no more 'human beings' in our sense of an *historical* human being. The 'healthy' automata are 'satisfied' (sports, art, eroticism, etc.), and the 'sick' ones get locked up."[xv]

Strauss concludes his response to Kojève by reprising the grand contrast between classical and modern political philosophy that overarched his Hobbes book. Whereas classical political philosophy held that the actualization of the best regime depends on chance, modern political philosophy seeks to guarantee the actualization of the optimal social order by lowering the goal for man. Whereas the "classical solution supplies a stable standard by which to judge any political order," the "modern solution eventually destroys the very idea of a standard that is independent of actual situations."[xvi] It is this interpretation of modern political philosophy as an inexorable slide from the realistic lowering of standards to the historicistic abolition of them that dominates the last set of writings by Strauss that I want to consider.

In "What Is Political Philosophy?" and "The Three Waves of Modernity," Strauss divides the history of modern political philosophy into three stages or "waves" and considers Hegel under the rubric of the second. But the thinker who dominates Strauss's discussion of the second wave is Rousseau. Already in *Natural Right and History,* Strauss argued

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29 October 1953: "Regarding the issue, I can only keep repeating the same thing. If there is something like 'human nature,' then you are surely right in everything" (*On Tyranny*, 261).

[xiii] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 207-10.

[xiv] See Strauss's letters of 22 August 1948 and 11 September 1957 (*On Tyranny*, 236-39, 291-94). In these letters, Strauss also questions whether Kojève can do without Hegel's philosophy of nature.

[xv] Kojève's letter to Strauss of 19 September 1950 (*On Tyranny*, 255). See also Kojève's famous footnote in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 161-62.

[xvi] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 210-11. For more on the Strauss-Kojève debate, see the essays in *Philosophy, History, and Tyranny: Reexamining the Debate between Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève*, ed. Burns and Frost; Emmanuel Patard, Introductory Remarks to "'Restatement' by Leo Strauss (Critical Edition)," *Interpretation* 36 (2008): 3-27; Pippin, "Being, Time, and Politics: The Strauss-Kojève Debate"; Michael Roth, "Natural Right and the End of History: Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève," *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* 3 (1991): 407-22; Victor Gourevitch, "Philosophy and Politics, I-II," *The Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1968): 58-94, 281-328; George Grant, "Tyranny and Wisdom: A Comment on the Controversy between Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève," *Social Research* 31 (1964): 45-72.

that by positing freedom rather than rationality as the distinctive character of man, "Rousseau may be said to have originated the 'philosophy of freedom'" that came to fruition in Kant and Hegel.[xvii] In "What Is Political Philosophy?" and "The Three Waves of Modernity," he stresses how Rousseau's doctrine of the general will destroyed the possibility of appealing from positive law to natural law and thus led to the complete collapse of the *ought* into the *is*, the ideal into the actual. In this way, Rousseau advanced the movement begun by Machiavelli and Hobbes that sought "to guarantee the actualization of the ideal, or to prove the necessary coincidence of the rational and the real." Hegel's turn to the philosophy of history represents a further step in this realistic process of lowering standards as a means of guaranteeing the actualization of the right order:

> The actualization of the right order is achieved by blind selfish passion: the right order is the unintended byproduct of human activities which are in no way directed toward the right order. The right order may have been as loftily conceived by Hegel as it was by Plato, which one may doubt. It certainly was thought by Hegel to be established in the Machiavellian way, not in the Platonic way: it was thought to be established in a manner which contradicts the right order itself. The delusions of communism are already the delusions of Hegel and even of Kant.[xviii]

Such a passage might lead one to believe that Strauss approaches Hegel in much the same way that Karl Popper did in his 1945 polemic *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, in which Hegel, along with Plato, is treated as a precursor of twentieth-century totalitarianism. But this is not at all the case. In a scathing review of John Wild's 1946 book *Plato's Theory of Man*, for example, Strauss sharply criticized Wild's totalitarian interpretation of Hegel, arguing that "Hegel is so far from being a 'totalitarian' that he rejects Plato's political philosophy precisely because he considers it 'totalitarian.'" Hegel criticizes Plato for lacking an awareness of the modern principle of "subjective freedom," which holds that the "individual as such has an infinite value."[xix] When we turn to Strauss's courses on Hegel, we find him repeatedly denying that Hegel is any sort of totalitarian thinker or deifier of the state. More generally, he insists that Hegel is a profound thinker who deserves to be treated with the utmost respect. In one place, for example, he states: "I am not a Hegelian and I do not believe that one can say history is rational. But, on the other hand, one must not underestimate the immense intellectual power which was Hegel's and by virtue of which he brought to light many very interesting things" (1965: 7).[xx]

The text Strauss chose for his courses on Hegel's political philosophy was *The Philosophy of History*. He says he chose this text rather than the *Philosophy of Right*,

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[xvii] Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 278-79.
[xviii] Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 51-56; "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 90-92.
[xix] Leo Strauss, "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy," *Social Research* 13 (1946), 358.
[xx] Strauss's courses are cited parenthetically by year and session number.

even though the latter was published by Hegel himself, because Hegel is much more accessible in his spoken lectures than in the written works he published during his lifetime (the same might be said of Strauss). He also claims that Hegel's teaching in the *Philosophy of Right* "is essentially related to his philosophy of history, and one understands his political philosophy proper . . . better if one views the historical matrix out of which that philosophy emerged" (1965: 1). For both courses, Strauss used John Sibree's English translation of *The Philosophy of History*, the only one available until quite recently, but he frequently corrects the translation and introduces passages from Georg Lasson's German edition, which contains transcribed material that is not found in Sibree's translation.[xxi]

One of the first questions that confronts any reader of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* is what the relationship is between philosophy of history and empirical history. To what extent is Hegel's philosophy of history based on an *a priori* logic or metaphysics that has little to do with the history written by professional historians? Hegel himself denies that the philosopher of history simply ignores empirical history: "we must take history as it is, and proceed historically, i.e., empirically," eschewing "*a priori* fabrications."[xxii] And Strauss backs him up on this point. He is at pains throughout his lectures, and often in the face of student skepticism, to bring out Hegel's empirical procedure. As he puts it early on in the 1965 course: Hegel is "one of the most empirical philosophers . . . Precisely by looking at history as it was and no arbitrary constructions and monkey business, will the reason of history appear" (1965: 1). "Empirical" here, of course, does not mean that the philosopher of history simply or passively receives the facts without exercising subjective discrimination or judgment. Even the ordinary historian, Hegel tells us, "brings his categories along with him, and see his data through them."[xxiii] Strauss concurs. Every historian has to distinguish the important from the unimportant, and this in no way detracts from his objectivity (1958: 5, 6; 1965: 4).

How does Hegel distinguish between the important and the unimportant in his philosophical account of history? Strauss claims that Hegel "regards as most important what a human society regards as most important," what it bows down to (1958: 5). Again and again in these lectures, Strauss points to the primacy of religion in Hegel's understanding of various societies and cultures. In order to understand a society as it understood itself, Hegel looked at what the members of that society looked up to or bowed down before: "A nation is what it is by virtue of what it looks up to, what it

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[xxi] A translation of the Introduction to *The Philosophy of History*, based on Johannes Hoffmeister's 1955 revision of Lasson's edition, was published in 1975; see *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). An English critical edition of the lectures, based on all the available transcriptions, is currently in the process of being published; see *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Volume I: Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822-23* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011). The editorial introduction to the latter volume contains a good account of the publication history of the lectures in both German and English.

[xxii] G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 13.

[xxiii] Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 14.

regards as highest, as the divine" (1965: 9). In his discussion of Hegel's interpretation of the Greeks, Strauss articulates the central premise of Hegel's empirical approach to history: "I remind you of the fact that Hegel asserts more than once what we can call the primacy of religion. In other words the core of a culture is religion" (1965: 11). It is this emphasis on the primacy of religion that ultimately distinguishes Hegel's approach to history from Marx's. Whereas "Marx understands man as primarily a needy being in the sense of bodily needs . . . Hegel understands man as the deferential being" (1965: 6).

Related to the question of Hegel's empiricism is the question of his fairness to non-Western cultures. In his discussions of Africa, China, and India, Hegel is perfectly comfortable making judgments about their relative value in the overall scheme of history. The students in Strauss's courses, similar to students today, raise many questions about this aspect of Hegel's philosophy, and Strauss addresses them head on. He refers to certain present-day liberals who assert that all cultures are equal, but he finds this position self-contradictory in that most past cultures have not been liberal (1965: 3). In the sixth session of the 1965 course, Strauss probes this liberal relativist position more deeply, asking after the standard by which Hegel judges various cultures. He argues that it is above all with a view to science and political liberty, two things that remain highly regarded even today by many people, that Hegel judges cultures to be superior or inferior. These are not arbitrary standards, though Strauss acknowledges that they—especially science—no longer have the manifest authority they once possessed in the past. Nevertheless, he urges skeptical students not to dismiss Hegel too quickly: "the same fairness to which China and India have claim, Hegel too has claim" (1965: 6).

As part of this obligation to treat Hegel justly, Strauss is particularly concerned to refute the charge that Hegel is some sort of racist. Yes, he believed that Protestantism was more congruent with the modern rational state than either Catholicism or Judaism, but this does not mean that Catholics or Jews (or Chinese or Hindus) can be excluded from becoming members of such a state. Strauss hammers this point home in a particularly compelling way. That Hegel had nothing to do with racism, he argues, is demonstrated by the fact that "a certain famous constitutional lawyer in Germany," namely, Carl Schmitt, "who became a Nazi himself for deplorable reasons," announced that Hegel died when Hitler came to power on January 31, 1933 (1965: 6). Strauss alludes to this statement by Schmitt at several points in his lectures, always as a way of discrediting any attempt to link Hegel with fascism or totalitarianism.

Apart from questions of method and approach, Strauss pays particular attention in his lectures to what Hegel calls the "means of spirit" and the goal that is achieved by those means. With respect to the means by which history progresses, Hegel famously focuses on the crucial role of passion and self-interest. In his earlier writings on Hegel, as we saw, Strauss laid strong emphasis on this aspect of Hegel's philosophy of history, connecting it with the conviction of the impotence of reason, the rejection of the morality of obedience, the emancipation of passion, and the preoccupation with actualization that characterizes modern political philosophy more generally. Toward the beginning of the 1965 course, he remarks on the convergence between the *is* and the *ought*, the amoral and the moral, in Hegel's philosophy: "Order comes out of disorder, without being intended.

This is, one can say, the simple formula of Hegel's philosophy of history." It is a formula that extends to history in general the invisible hand argument Adam Smith used to analyze the laws of economics (1965: 1). Toward the end of the course, in a lengthy digression on "the very notion of a philosophy of history," Strauss comes back to this idea that Hegel adopted Adam Smith's economic teaching in his philosophy of history, showing how the rational order emerges naturally out of individuals pursuing their self-interested desires. This was all part of the modern quest to guarantee the actualization of the best regime. Whereas the traditional view had been that the actualization of the best regime required "severe self-sacrifice" and therefore depended on chance, the modern view as articulated by Hegel held that the best regime resulted from the indulgence of desire. The rational and the actual thus necessarily coincided (1965: 13).

Even here, though, Strauss adds some nuances in his lectures that are not present in the broad-brush strokes of his earlier published writings. For example, in connection with Hegel's discussion of world-historical individuals like Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Napoleon, who brought about the rational end by acting on their "morally bad passions," Strauss points out that Hegel's treatment is not nearly as tough as Machiavelli's: "Strange as it may sound, I believe you will gradually see that Hegel's conception of the world-historical individual is more moral than that of Machiavelli. I think, in a way, he moralizes the hero and thus brings about this union between the universal and the particular" (1965: 2; see also 3).

There is a very interesting discussion of the morality/immorality of the world-historical individual in the 1958 course. In connection with Hegel's notorious comment that the world-historical individual "must necessarily trample on many an innocent flower, crushing much that gets in its way,[xxiv] Strauss considers the question whether Hegel would have excused the actions of the Communists and Nazis under this principle. He is doubtful that he would have. He first points out that Hegel "would never have defended" Napoleon's illegal execution of some individual (unfortunately the text is garbled) that violated international law. He continues: "But let us take the 'murder,' as they say now, of twenty million peasants by Stalin—innocent flowers, we understand. What about that? Hegel could not argue from a moral point of view in the strictly moral sense, but I think he would take a broad political view and say that a regime that establishes itself in this way, against such powerful resistance, and at a certain point numbers become meaningful . . ." (1958: 4). Here the text breaks off as the recording reel is being changed, but the clear implication seems to be that Strauss does not think that Hegel's notion of the world-historical individual can be used to justify the actions of Stalin or Hitler.

Strauss is not entirely unsympathetic to Hegel's somewhat hardboiled attitude toward self-righteous moralism in politics. He calls Hegel "the most powerful critic of the moralistic attitude toward the great political issues" (1958: 4). The high-water mark of such moralism was achieved in the eighteenth century with the philosophies of Rousseau and Kant (1965: 3). Hegel's criticism of it consists, first, in pointing out that the moral individual's protest against the immorality of the historical process amounts to a contemptible desire that virtue be rewarded in this life. Second, Hegel argues that, if the

[xxiv] Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 35.

moral individual were really consistent, he would desire the destruction of the immoral order in which his virtue flourishes. The virtuous senator in the Roman Republic, say, Cicero, should see the destruction of the Republic as a "perfectly legitimate treatment of a rotten regime." Finally, Hegel criticizes the "schoolmasters" and valet psychologists who condemn the world-historical deeds of an Alexander the Great or a Caesar simply because they were motivated by the desire for glory. In support of Hegel, Strauss alludes to Plato's more profound treatment of this issue in the *Republic* through the relationship of Socrates and the ambitious young Glaucon. He also seems to endorse Hegel's impatience with political moralizing by referring to the hypocritical pacifism of the British Labour Party in the 1930s. He concludes that "one cannot say that Hegel is an immoralist. In spirit he is very far from that." He adds, significantly, however, that "Hegel is helped . . . by his certainty that a radical breach of law, what we call a revolution, is the victory of the higher concept of justice over a lower concept of justice. In the moment this premise becomes doubtful, one will become somewhat hesitant to accept Hegel's proposition" (1958: 5).

From Hegel's discussion of the means of spirit, Strauss turns to his analysis of the end or goal that is achieved through those means, namely, the rational state. And as I have already pointed out, he categorically denies throughout his lectures that Hegel can in any way be described as a totalitarian thinker or one who deifies the state. The clearest expression of this view comes when Strauss responds to a skeptical student:

> Perhaps you are a victim of those people who call Hegel a deifier of the state and a precursor of totalitarianism, which is simply not true. Hegel accepted the constitutional monarchy of the nineteenth century, which was quite authoritarian but the opposite of totalitarian. The freedom of the economic sphere was taken for granted. It had to be protected, of course, by protections against fraud, the protection of property, and so on. That was clear. In this sense, Hegel is a liberal (1965: 8).

In the 1958 course, Strauss makes a similar point in response to a student who asks Strauss to clarify his claim that Hegel would never have accepted either communism or National Socialism as falling within the rationality of history. Strauss replies that Hegel's belief in the rights of man implies that "a fair and independent judiciary is absolutely essential to a civilized and respectable state," and such an institution cannot exist in either a communist or fascist regime. "Hegel was in this sense a constitutionalist." Strauss adds that Hegel also "admitted natural right" and affirmed that the principles of property, the inviolability of the person, and so forth "are things which do not depend on human arbitrariness or legal enactment but are truly natural, rational principles," even though they have not always been known as such. "Hegel is not a relativist; on the contrary, he is a big bogey for all relativists—you know, the absolutist par excellence!" (1958: 4).[xxv]

[xxv] Strauss insists on Hegel's anti-relativistic rationalism throughout his lectures. When a student asks whether Hegel's critique of the Enlightenment involved a rejection of the reason and certainty that belonged to it, Strauss responds: "Oh no. According to Hegel's claim, he is much more rigorous than the Enlightenment was" (1965: 11). In his 1958 lectures, he states: "You must

As the statements in the previous paragraph show, Strauss does not characterize Hegel's political philosophy simply in terms of what it is not. In addition to not being a totalitarian or deifier of the state, Hegel is said to be a liberal, a constitutionalist, and a believer in natural right. The two attributes that Strauss comes back to again and again in his lectures to characterize Hegel's political philosophy are the rights of man and an educated, independent civil service: "If one wants a single formula indicating what Hegel's philosophy of right stands for, it would be 'rights of man' plus a wholly independent civil service" (1958: 10).[xxvi] With respect to the rights of man, we have already seen Strauss mention Hegel's support of the right of property and the inviolability of the person. He also emphasizes Hegel's commitment to religious liberty, at one point calling him "amazingly liberal" in this regard (1958: 5).

While Hegel was a liberal in his defense of the rights of man, his belief that government should be run by a trained bureaucracy showed that he was no democrat. Strauss brings out this anti-democratic aspect of Hegel's political philosophy by looking carefully at Hegel's critique of "liberalism" in the final pages of *The Philosophy of History*. Against a government presided over by an educated civil service, Hegel argues that "liberalism"—by which he really means democracy—sets up "the atomistic principle . . . which insists upon the sway of individual wills; maintaining that all government should emanate from their express power, and have their express sanction." Hegel believes that this illicit extension of the rights of man into the political sphere will lead to "agitation and unrest," the solution for which will have to be worked out in the future.[xxvii] Strauss comments on this passage that it "is probably the strongest statement in favor of the view that Hegel still sees unsolved problems" (1965: 16).

We may doubt that democracy necessarily poses the problem for constitutional government that Hegel suggested it did. But Strauss points to another difficulty in Hegel's doctrine of the state that may not be so easily resolved. Not surprisingly, given Strauss's philosophical preoccupations, it concerns the relationship between the state and religion, the theologico-political problem. As we have seen, Strauss lays great emphasis on the fact that Hegel regards religion as the fundamental phenomenon in understanding

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not forget one thing: Hegel's rationalism is unsurpassed and unrivaled; as far as universal certainty goes, he wouldn't cede in any way to mathematics" (1958: 2).

[xxvi] This characterization of Hegel's political philosophy also appears in some of Strauss's published writings; see "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, ed. Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 39; also the Preface to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 2.

[xxvii] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 452. This passage appears in Hegel's rather hurried account of the last stage of history, that of his own time. Strauss comments rather humorously on why Hegel abbreviates his narrative at the end of *The Philosophy of History*: "Hegel is much briefer on the later history not because he did not regard it as important but because this is one of the failings of professors. Hegel was a professor, after all, and he took so much time at the beginning that he did not have the time to speak with equal detail about the end. That is really true that this happens generally, and Hegel is no exception" (1958: 10). Strauss knew whereof he spoke, since he commits the same professorial sin in his own lectures.

a society, any society. This goes for the modern rational state as well, which rests on the religious foundation of Protestantism. By emphasizing the religious basis of the state, Hegel diverges from liberal secularism and has far more in common with the classical notion of the regime as relating to the "spirit of the whole society" (1958: 4). And yet, as we have also seen, Hegel is "amazingly liberal" when it comes to granting citizenship to various religious groups: Catholics, Jews, even Quakers and Anabaptists. It is true that in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel argues that the state should require citizens to belong to some religious community, but it need not be concerned with which specific one.[xxviii]

This, for Strauss, constitutes a major ambiguity in Hegel's teaching. On the one hand, Hegel seems to suggest that religion, specifically Protestantism, is a crucial bond for the modern state. On the other, he seems to discount its importance by granting citizenship to non-Protestants. Hegel would perhaps suggest that reason in the form of philosophy can take the place of religion as the binding force of society, but this clearly applies only to a few gifted individuals. What happens to the vast majority of nonphilosophical citizens? In his 1958 course Strauss asks: "how do these people that can partake of reason only via religion still partake of reason when religion is no longer there as the most socially potent force? Think of the simple fact that if the newspaper takes the place of the daily prayer, it empties the society completely. I think here is no provision for that grave problem in Hegel or in anything which is today inspired by Hegel" (1958: 5).

Strauss treats the theologico-political problem in Hegel at even greater length in the 1965 course, which only shows how seriously he took it. Once again, he underlines the primacy of religion in Hegel. But unlike in other societies—ancient Greece, for example—the modern state is indifferent to the specific religion of its members. Strauss again alludes to the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel says that the state should require every citizen to be a member of a religious community and yet be indifferent as to which specific one. There is a contradiction here, which Hegel tries to resolve by suggesting that philosophical insight might replace religion, but this does not do much for the nonphilosophical many. Because they cannot shut out the disenchanting aspects of modern culture, the common people gradually lose their naïve faith, but they have nothing to replace it.

> They surely do not have the comfort of Hegelian philosophy. Hegel cannot do more than shrug his shoulders. He knows that sooner or later the circles of property and culture-think will affect the simple people. The circles of culture and property cannot always stop conversation when a maid enters at a dinner . . . So the common people will gradually be affected by what is going on among their betters. But they don't become philosophers or anything like philosophers. They are in a difficult situation—a discord. Hegel has no comfort at this point (1965: 13).

The "discord" Strauss points out here raises serious questions about the claim that the political order described by Hegel is the simply rational order. Strauss says there is only

[xxviii] See G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §270R, p. 295.

one contemporary thinker he knows of who continues to argue on behalf of the Hegelian state: Alexandre Kojève, "who wrote probably the best book on Hegel in this generation." But Strauss makes clear that Kojève radically transforms Hegel in his interpretation. The "universal and homogeneous state" that Kojève describes is only half-Hegelian, the rest is Marx. The state articulated in the *Philosophy of Right* is neither politically universal nor socially homogeneous.[xxix] Strauss concedes that a "case can be made that what Hegel meant is, under the radically changed circumstance of the twentieth century," something like what Kojève describes: "abolition of war and poverty and hard work, and within that society the possibility of a genuine philosophy." Nevertheless, he still does not think that Kojève's universal and homogeneous state resolves the grave problem raised above concerning the absence of a social bond in the modern state stemming from the decline of religion (1958: 5, 7; 1965: 12).

Apart from his conception of the universal and homogeneous state, Kojève is perhaps best known for his controversial notion of the "end of history." This notion plays a huge role in Strauss's lectures, though without being attributed to Kojève. In the 1965 course, he mentions it in the first lecture in connection with the famous passage from the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* on the Owl of Minerva, a passage Strauss says will serve "as a kind of motto for this course." The implication of this passage, according to Strauss, an implication drawn by Spengler in *The Decline of the West*, is that modernity represents the "final stage" of history, after which "nothing of any importance can come. There may be a spreading . . . but no fundamental change, no creation is possible anymore." Insofar as Hegel's philosophy represents the most comprehensive self-understanding of modernity, it is the "final doctrine." Strauss cautions that this does not make Hegel arrogant; almost all great philosophers have "laid this claim to finality."[xxx] Nevertheless, the belief in an absolute moment in history when all contradictions have been reconciled constitutes "the most controversial thing in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*" (1965: 1).

Responding to a student, Strauss acknowledges that it is a question—"the crucial question"—whether Hegel actually believed that his philosophy and the social order of his time constituted the end or peak of history. But in both the 1958 course and the 1965 course, he generally answers that question in the affirmative. Perhaps the most commonly adduced piece of evidence that Hegel did not believe history had come to a definitive end is the passage in the Introduction of the *Philosophy of History* about America as the "land of the future."[xxxi] Strauss brings this passage up on several occasions, but he denies that it suggests that any "new principle of fundamental importance" will emerge in America

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[xxix] This suggests the danger of simply assimilating Strauss's interpretation of Hegel to that Kojève—a danger not always avoided, for example, by MacDonald and Craig in *Recovering Hegel from the Critique of Leo Strauss*, chapter 1. Again, see Newell, "Kojève's Hegel, Hegel's Hegel, and Strauss's Hegel," 237-44, on the differences between Strauss's reading of Hegel and Kojève's.

[xxx] With respect to this claim to finality, Strauss says of Hegel in another place that he "was not an arrogant man at all. When you read his more personal statements, it is absolutely amazing, the noble selflessness. He is not a boaster at all" (1958: 5).

[xxxi] Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 90.

(1958: 5, 6; 1965; 4, 5).[xxxii] He also in several places registers his difference with R. G. Collingwood on this point (1958: 4, 5, 10; 1965: 14).[xxxiii]

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Strauss's discussion of the end of history in these lectures is the ambiguity he detects in Hegel's understanding of it. For Hegel, a people is at its most vital when it is not fully conscious of itself, when it does not yet know its distinctive work. When a people does finally become self-conscious in a reflective way, reverence ceases, self-interest emerges, and decay or corruption sets in. In this way, Strauss argues, Hegel seems to agree with Rousseau's analysis in the *First Discourse* that science and moral and social corruption go together. This is what is implied in Hegel's famous saying that the "Owl of Minerva takes flight with the coming of the dusk": philosophic understanding appears on the scene only when a civilization is in decline. Hegel suggests this applies not merely to past philosophies but also to his own in relation to modern Europe. As he did in his discussion of Hegel's understanding of the relationship between the state and religion, Strauss shows that Hegel's "view of the human order . . . is not as harmonious as it is frequently presented." The good, the beautiful, and the true do not necessarily all go together: "The development of man's most important desire and, according to Hegel, his highest desire, the desire for knowledge . . . is not possible under the same conditions under which society has really flourished" (1965:2).

Strauss's elaboration of this ambiguity in Hegel's understanding of the end of history has a distinctly Nietzschean, or even Spenglerian, ring. Indeed, references to Spengler's *Decline of the West* abound in Strauss's discussion. For Hegel, the end of history means that all the fundamental problems have been solved; there remain no fundamental tasks. In this sense, the peak of history is also a going down or decline. This is the ominous meaning of the Owl of Minerva passage. The twilight in which philosophical wisdom appears is the twilight of nihilism. It is the dawning of Spengler's "Faustian culture" and Nietzsche's "last man." It is the "end of all meaningful life." Strauss finds this implication of Hegel's notion of the end of history so problematic that he wonders whether "Hegel was fully aware of what he clearly implied: that with fulfillment, with the completion of world history, there is now the beginning of a final decay, a final corruption of mankind." He says that "this is really the great problem of Hegel: What is the end of history, and what does this mean? Is it possible to live on that basis? One could say that this was the beginning of Nietzsche's criticism of Hegel" (1958: 3, 5; 1965: 11, 13).

[xxxii] In both the 1958 course and the 1965 course, Strauss quotes a passage in the German text that does not appear in the English translation to prove his point that Hegel did not envisage anything radically new occurring in America (1958: 6; 1965: 4). The passage reads: "The totality consists in the union of the three principles, and this union takes place in Europe" (G.W.F. Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister [Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1955], 212).

[xxxiii] Collingwood's denial that Hegel believed history ended in the present and precluded future progress is found in *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 119-20. Strauss wrote an extremely critical review of this book: "On Collingwood's Philosophy of History," *The Review of Metaphysics* 5 (1952): 559-86.

It was Nietzsche's criticism of the Hegelian end of history that Strauss raised against Kojève in his debate with him in *On Tyranny*, and it is hard not to think of that debate in connection with Strauss's discussion of the end of history in his lectures. Despite the note of criticism, Strauss still credits Hegel with an awareness of the fundamental tension between knowledge and political life—the tension so forcefully articulated by Rousseau in the *First Discourse*—that eludes lesser thinkers. Strauss says Marx, for example, unlike Hegel, completely disregarded this crucial complication in Rousseau's teaching. He adds: "I think one cannot mention Marx and Hegel in the same breath as far as these questions go, because Marx is infinitely less philosophic than Hegel was" (1958: 3).

The respect for Hegel as a thinker that comes through in this passage and, indeed, throughout Strauss's lectures is one of the things that makes them particularly worth having. Of course, such respect does not imply agreement. In keeping with the more critical posture found in his published writings, Strauss insists in these lectures that he is not a Hegelian (again, see 1965: 7).[xxxiv] Nevertheless, he does not take his primary purpose in the classroom to be to critique Hegel but to give students an appreciation of a major modern thinker—"the outstanding philosopher of the nineteenth century"[xxxv]—comparable in stature to Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. Strauss's exemplary understanding of the primary task of the teacher is nicely captured in the following statement from the 1958 course: "But what . . . I am not a Hegelian; I do not defend my own position; but we must try to understand what Hegel means" (1958: 6).

One of principal appeals of these lectures is what they reveal about Strauss as a teacher, in particular his patience, generosity, humanity, and humor. With respect to the latter, at the beginning of one class session, he commends the paper of a student—a Mr. Reinken, who also had the responsibility in the 1965 course of reading aloud the passages from *The Philosophy of History* that Strauss wished to discuss—for being "very delightful. You were the first one, I believe, whose paper was accompanied by enjoyment." He follows this with one of the great understatements of all time: "When reading Hegel himself, one is not induced to smile. So it is from a non-Hegelian point of view that the smiling comes in" (1965: 15). Those who remember the Tareyton cigarette commercials from the 1960s will appreciate Strauss's colloquial encapsulation of the master-slave dialectic: "The slave is the one who just gives in, who rather switches than fights. And the master is the one who rather fights than switches" (1965: 14). I will resist the temptation to pile up more examples, leaving it to the reader of these lectures to find the buried treasures on his or her own.

[xxxiv] As he does in his private correspondence. In a letter to Kojève on 11 September 1957, Strauss writes: "My general reaction to your statements is that we are poles apart. The root of the question is I suppose the same as it always was, that you are convinced of the truth of Hegel (Marx) and I am not" (Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 291).

[xxxiv] Leo Strauss, "Political Philosophy and History," in *What Is Political Philosophy and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 58.

[xxxv] Leo Strauss, "Political Philosophy and History," in *What Is Political Philosophy and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 58.

The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss comment on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and respond generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on natural right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Strauss's colleague Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This project received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The remastered audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward but did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed

Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director, Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker of the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor
August 2014

Editorial Headnote

This course was taught in a seminar form. Strauss often began the discussion by responding to a student's paper, which was read at the beginning of the session. The reading of students' papers was not recorded. He would then make general remarks, a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The text assigned for this course was G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956). The passages read aloud are not reproduced in full but record only the beginning and ending phrases, with the missing portion indicated with ellipses.

There are no surviving audiotapes of this course. The transcript is based upon the original transcript, made by persons unknown to us, which can be consulted in the Leo Strauss archive in Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library.

Ellipses original to the transcript, which indicate that the recording was inaudible, have been retained. In some cases, the editor has supplied what he thought was the missing word or phrase. These insertions are in brackets and footnoted.

This transcript was edited by Paul Franco, with assistance from Eliza Little.

Session 1: October 8, 1958

Leo Strauss: In order to begin at the beginning, let us make a brief survey of the common opinions regarding Hegel, with which you are doubtless familiar. These opinions are never entirely groundless, and they must be spelled out since they are obstacles to the understanding. We are influenced by them more or less inevitably. Now the first view which you will find in much of the[1] literature is that Hegel is a "reactionary metaphysician." You can also put it into two parts. He is both a reactionary and a metaphysician: a metaphysician, i.e., unscientific, and a reactionary because he sold his soul to the Prussian sham-constitutional monarchy of the early nineteenth century. But there is an immediately opposed position which is equally well known that starts from the fact that Hegel, according to the explicit statement of Marx, is the "spiritual father of Marxism."[i] Now what did Marx mean when he said that he had put something in Hegel on the feet, after Hegel had put it on the head?[ii] It had something to do with Hegel's dialectical method, of which we will hear something later.

Now what is the practical meaning of dialectics, without going into the more abstruse digressions now? It means that life proceeds through contradictions, but in such a way that the contradictions are necessarily resolved. You have a thesis and an antithesis which necessarily point to a synthesis which solves the contradiction. The particular synthesis given on the way, the particular solution, proves to be unsatisfactory, so then synthesis A becomes thesis *alpha*, which calls for antithesis *beta*, and then for synthesis *gamma*, and so on. But it is understood by both Hegel and Marx that there is eventually "The Synthesis," the reconciliation of all contradictions. In other words, the historical process is essentially rational. This is a common point to both Hegel and Marx. In the words of Marx: "Mankind [social man, the society—LS] does not pose itself any tasks which it cannot solve."[iii] And the moment man poses himself a task, as distinguished from mere dreaming, the means for the solution is already present.

This understanding of the historical process is connected with what one calls Hegel's "realism." Now the formula for that realism which Hegel gives in one of his published works is this: political philosophy, which had always been—[2][according] to him—a teaching of what the best societies or the just societies or the rules of justice are, no longer has to teach an "ought" but only has to understand what "is." This is so because the [rational] ideal[3] of the just is necessarily real. Therefore what one has to do is to "understand reality" and then you know what ought to be done. This may sound harsh, and there are certain ambiguities of course, but in this there is full agreement between Hegel and Marx. In order to know what to do, you analyze the situation—but broadly, not just little things, and intelligently—and then you know what has to be done. The rational

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[i] This quotation does not seem to occur in Marx's own writings. It is seen in Evald Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic, Essays on its History and Theory*, trans. H. Campbell Creighton (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 197.

[ii] Karl Marx, "Preface to the Second Edition" in *Capital Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

[iii] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977).

is the real, and the real is the rational![iv] This of course means in Hegel, as well as in Marx, not the glorification of the established order but[4] [the equal recognition of] the dissatisfaction with[5] [the established order] to be as real as the satisfaction with it. You have to see which of the two possibilities[6] [is] in order at the time.

Another point in which Hegel prepared Marx decisively concerns the relation of thought and society. At first glance, Hegel looks like the spiritualistic metaphysician and Marx like the materialist. I do not wish to minimize this enormous difference, but there is also this point to consider: according to Hegel the philosopher is the son of his time. There is no possibility for man as[7] [an individual] and hence for the philosopher to transcend the times. This historicism, or historicization of history as we may call it, is an indispensable condition for Marxist views, because Marx elaborated his thought in the direction that since thought is dependent on the time and the time is dependent in its turn on the relations of production, then philosophy can only be ideology. This is of course a break with Hegel, but it is somehow prepared by Hegel.

I mention two other points which are important not in connection with Marx but on their own merit. For Hegel, the state as he presented it in his *Philosophy of Right* is the rational state. The rational state has come into being after the French Revolution, but it is simply the rational state. It has two characteristics which are of immediate importance here. In the first place, the rational state is based on what we may call "the recognition of the rights of man." This is of course a heritage from the older tradition, and especially the French Revolutionary tradition. In the second place, it is the rational state because it is the state in which intelligence rules. Intelligence does not mean here the rule of philosophers; it means, in practice, the rule of a very highly educated civil service. When people speak today about "bureaucracy" and write books about it, they do not sufficiently pay attention to the fact that the first philosopher who articulated this phenomenon now called bureaucracy was Hegel. He did not call it with this derogatory name but with a more dignified and perhaps more adequate name. It depends on the circumstances. And it is highly educated civil servants who were not mere technicians, mere administrators. This is a point which I would say occurs to us immediately when we think of the opinions with which we are confronted.

Now a word about Hegel's writings. There was an amazing contrast between two sets of his writings. One is his writings proper, things he wrote himself and published himself. There are very few of these. If we disregard the essays and articles, of which there are not very many, we have his *Phenomenology of Mind*, his *Logic*, his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophic Sciences*, and his *Philosophy of Right*. This is less than many professors publish, both before and after Hegel's time—and during it. But there is an amazingly extensive part of his works which consists of his lectures, which were published after his death, partly from Hegel's manuscripts and partly from the notes of students. While the books he wrote for publication are extremely difficult, his lectures are fairly easy to understand—much easier at any rate than his published writings. Hegel apparently had this great art that he could make the distinction between what was good for writing and

[iv] G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Preface, 20-21.

what was good for speaking. He thought that when you write you do not have to be so easygoing as you must be when speaking. For this reason we shall concentrate in this course, at least in the first part of it, on a book which is really lectures of Hegel which were put together and edited—of course, on the philosophy of history.

Since I do not know what the different preparations of the different students is, and since it is wise on such occasions to expect as little as possible, I have to say a few words about the situation which Hegel presupposes. He spoke to contemporaries, to people in the 1820's in Germany. What was the situation which Hegel had to face when he presented his novel thoughts? Hegel is classified usually as the last and perhaps the greatest of that series of illustrious men called the "German Idealists" which began with Kant and led, via Fichte and Schelling, to Hegel, and ended with Hegel. There was a kind of afterglow, of course, throughout the nineteenth century both in Germany and England, but then Hegel's fame completely collapsed after 1870. Only in our century was there a neo-Hegelianism, beginning in 1910 or so, primarily in Italy with Croce, and also in Germany.

What was German Idealism? German Idealism, especially in its post-Kantian form, had two different sources, each of which was as important as the other. One source was Kant, and the other was Spinoza.[8] We must see how these two teachings converged. In order to understand this, one must remind oneself for a moment at least of the situation in Europe, and especially in Germany, prior to the emergence of Kant and Spinoza—Spinoza, of course, means the *discovery* of Spinoza. The two critical years are 1781, with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and 1785, when a man who is probably unknown to most of you published a book on the teachings of Spinoza.[v] These were the two epoch-making events during Hegel's formative years. From 1785 on begins the open and very powerful influence of Spinoza. Up to that point people had talked of Spinoza as a dead dog; then the open admiration of Spinoza began in 1785.

Prior to 1785, the preponderant thing in Germany and to some extent in the other countries was speculative metaphysics. This speculative metaphysics meant, crudely speaking, a modified and simplified Thomism. Of course it was not Thomism, because this was in a Protestant environment, but long before the eighteenth century the head Protestants began rewriting Thomism for Protestant purposes, if I may say so. Christian Wolff is the most famous representative of this eighteenth-century scholasticism, and one could easily trace it back to . . . he last great representative of Thomism in the early seventeenth century.[vi] This speculative metaphysics was theistic; it taught the immortality of the individual soul. But in one respect it was already problematic from the traditional point of view, namely, the status of the freedom of the will had become doubtful. That was due to the whole determinism of modern science, which had influenced this metaphysics via Leibniz. The issue[9] [at] the center of discussion in the eighteenth century was whether reason is self-sufficient, or is there a need for revelation. The Wolffian

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[v] F. H. Jacobi (1743-1819) published *Briefe über die Lehre Spinozas* (*Letters on the Teaching of Spinoza*) in 1785, thus inaugurating the so-called pantheism controversy in Germany.
[vi] Strauss probably has Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) in mind here.

school was split regarding this crucial question. Some said this speculative metaphysics is the truth about God and the soul, and others said that revelation is needed in addition.

There was, however, another issue which was more important from the point of view of future developments, but then it looked a bit like a borderline set. Outside this field of speculative metaphysics there was something coming, chiefly from France: materialism. So the intra-philosophic issue was the spiritualism of Wolff or Leibniz versus the materialism of the French—and these Frenchmen were ultimately the pupils of Hobbes. So behind these relatively small professors who fight it out, we find the heroic figures of Leibniz and Hobbes arrayed against each other in a mortal fight.

How was this situation affected by the emergence of Kant in the first place and of Spinoza in the second place? Kant destroyed the basis of the previous discussion of spiritualism versus materialism by allegedly proving that the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are invalid. But at the same time and in the same act, Kant also destroyed materialism. His crucial thesis—that we have knowledge only of the phenomenal world, as he called it, as distinguished from the thing-in-itself—precisely had this meaning. As far as knowledge goes the materialists were right, Kant, as it were, says. But that is only knowledge of the phenomenal world, and therefore it has no significance as regards the true character of reality.

This crucial distinction between the phenomenal world and the thing-in-itself stems from Kant, because the Platonic distinction means something entirely different. Science as science is limited to the phenomenal world, but how must science be understood? The phenomenal world, which we know both scientifically and prescientifically, is constituted by acts of the mind, by acts essential to the mind, by the *a priori*, as Kant put it. All knowledge requires sense data, but sense data are blind and meaningless if they are not ordered, organized, and interpreted. This ordered organization and interpretation is not arbitrary, is not based on mere convention—as present-day logical positivism says—but it is made in an evidently necessary way, according to the essential structure of the understanding itself. That is the meaning of *a priori*. As Kant put it: "The understanding prescribes to nature its laws."[vii] The most fundamental laws of nature are not based on experience, because experience would never guarantee universal validity; they are due to the spontaneity of the understanding itself. But on the other hand, the activity of the understanding itself, by itself, projects the overall plan of a possible nature. This would never lead to knowledge if it were not supplemented by the given, by what we can know only through sense experience. This spontaneity of the understanding points to something higher than itself.

The term "spontaneity" was taken from Aristotle, where Aristotle had spoken of the "spontaneity of the understanding."[viii] But Aristotle spoke of spontaneity in connection with living things and their spontaneity, and he distinguished it as something lower—

[vii] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), §36; see also *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), Preface, 4.

[viii] See especially Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 3, chapters 1-5.

because the brutes possess it also—than freedom, as we can say. Similarly, the "spontaneity of the understanding" which Kant speaks of points to a freedom which is higher than that of the understanding proper. In other words, the understanding is not self-sufficient because it needs a supplementation by sense perception. There are acts of the mind which are self-sufficient; there is something in man in which his reason alone is perfectly sufficient without any experience to give him concrete guidance, and this is what Kant calls "reason" as distinguished from "understanding." The reason which fulfills these specifications of being fully adequate without experience is called "pure reason." There is no need for anything given, and no possibility of anything given as far as the principles of human action are concerned, both individually and collectively. The moral law is not derived from experience and cannot be derived from experience. There is a gulf between the "is"—between reality, as people say, which can only be known by interpreting sense data—and the "ought," regarding which our reason is self-sufficient. As regards morality, there cannot be anything given. That is the absolute novelty of Kant. Of course there are many other novelties one could mention, but this is the most striking. In other words, the moral principles cannot be deduced from man's nature.

The most important moral doctrine prior to Kant, a doctrine which goes back to Plato and Aristotle and which still lived in Kant's time in Germany in the form of Wolffian philosophy, had said that in order to establish the moral law you have to start from the nature of man, i.e., man's natural inclinations. "Natural inclinations" were the key words. Kant rejects that altogether, and inclinations and morality become, in a sense, opposites. He argued that traditional moral philosophy "at its best"—he says that—starts from man's natural inclinations and it assumes, therefore, that the natural inclinations are good. Why should they be good, Kant asks, and how do we know that? Raising this question meant, certainly in modern times, answering it in the negative—theoretically, at any rate. There is no evident necessity for the natural to be good. Kant is very anxious to prove later in his systematic exposition that our natural inclinations are good, but he has to prove that because there is no intrinsic necessity for natural inclinations to be good.

What Kant achieves in this[10], and what he claims to achieve by divorcing morality from natural inclinations, is that he liberates man from "any tutelage from nature or God"[ix]—again his words. This is the precise meaning of autonomy as Kant meant it. Man's tutelage is over. The guiding principles of action and therewith for man's overall orientation originate entirely in the free acts of his reason. These free acts of his reason cannot be traced to nature, even to human nature. You must not forget that when people like the Stoics, for example, speak of the "autonomy of man," this autonomy presupposes the tutelage of nature. Man is autonomous if he lives according to nature; they are identical for the Stoics. For Kant, the equation of autonomy and living according to nature is no longer valid. A decisive step, and it is present on every page and every line of Hegel. It is obvious that you do not liberate yourself from nature by conquering her or mastering her, because in the act of conquering her you must obey her: you must follow her and see how you can vanquish her. The true liberation of man from any tutelage of nature is achieved through this moral freedom that Kant understands.

[ix] Immanuel Kant, "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History," in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 226-28.

I must add a few more points regarding the Kantian position, otherwise we will not get any access to Hegel. According to Kant the moral teaching proper, the teaching of pure reason regarding what we ought to do individually and socially, needs a supplement, and this supplement is called by Kant "the postulates of practical reason."[x] These postulates are, to take a more simple example of the formula: God, immortality of the soul, and freedom of the will. God and immortality of the soul cannot be known but they must be postulated on the basis of our moral commitment, as we would call it today.

So Kant then admits the necessity of a metaphysics, and this metaphysics is not so greatly different from the then-common metaphysics as far as content is concerned. It is, however, radically different from the then-common metaphysics by its mold. It is a practical metaphysics, not a speculative metaphysics or a theoretical one. It is a postulate of God and immortality of the soul on the basis of morality. Morality itself cannot be based on anything, either God or nature. But how then can it have any content? Now here Kant's teaching is clear and very well known. According to Kant ethics must be formal. The only way of knowing our duty or the moral law is as follows. We all act on maxims, whether we like it or not. For example, some people act on the maxim, "I would like to get the most for the least effort." That would be a maxim. Or you can also take a more concrete maxim like, "I would like to pay the minimum of taxes," and so on. Kant's famous formula of morality called "the categorical imperative" is this: "Act in such a way that your maxim can be universalized, so that it can become a universal law." For example, a man is prepared to act on the maxim that he will make false promises when he borrows money to pay it back. Now he universalizes that and says that *everyone* ought to make false promises when he borrows money, and then he sees immediately that this universalized maxim is self-destructive. You don't have to know anything about human life—Kant says so: even a ten-year-old child would know this. You only have to think straight and then you see that the formal character, the susceptibility of the maxim to become a universal obligatory thought, is sufficient to see what is and what is not moral. This is the famous formal ethics of Kant, and it is one of the major objections that Hegel had against him.

This was one of the difficulties, but the most important difficulty which Hegel had with Kant was that Kant's whole doctrine, both his moral and his theoretical doctrines, rested on the distinction between the phenomena and the thing-in-itself: the thing-in-itself is unknowable. One can state Hegel's criticism of Kant as follows. For Kant, you cannot say the thing-in-itself is unknowable; if it is unknowable, how do we know that it is? We must know at least this much; but if we know this much we already know a lot, and then you can't tell how far it might go. That was one of the greatest difficulties which appeared before Hegel, but this affair became the center of Hegel. This much for what Kant meant on the most obvious level for Hegel.

I turn now to the second giant stream or river which entered into German Idealism, and that is Spinoza. Now what did Spinoza mean, at first glance? I am not speaking of any

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[x] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 110-21.

profound thing, only the most superficial. Spinoza was regarded by most people—not by Hegel, but by most people—and with some justice, as a pantheist. His God is not a personal God, which means in plain English that He does not possess intelligence or will. This is something diametrically opposite to Kant, but in one point it agrees with Kant. It agrees with Kant as to this: the speculative metaphysics of Wolff, which is ultimately the Thomistic doctrine, is rot! In this respect both influences converged. But there is another point in which the agreement was perhaps deeper. I will state it first for Spinoza. Spinoza's main work is called *Ethics Demonstrated in a Geometric Manner*. "Geometric" means here scientific, deductively scientific. The truth about the whole can and must be presented in the form of [a] Euclidian deductive system. Spinoza says quietly that we must possess adequate knowledge of the essence of God, and, since we possess adequate knowledge of the first cause of everything, we potentially possess knowledge of everything, we only have to go down in a deductive manner until we reach a particular point. This is the other crucial element which Spinoza contributed to German Idealism, as we shall see.

Now how do these two influences converge, and what do they mean when they converge? Let me try to state it, again in a very provisional manner. The deductive system of Spinoza implies that the world as we know it, man included, proceeded necessarily from God. There is no choice, no free will involved; otherwise mathematical deduction would be impossible, since mathematical deduction means necessity. So the world flows from God, this necessity; nay, God is the world, or God is in the world. God is not extra-mundane. This took a non-Spinozan form in German Idealism in the following way: God is in the world but especially in man's actions in history. This is neither the Kantian theory nor Spinozan theory, but it emerges out of the convergence of Kant and Spinoza.

To make a step toward understanding this point, we start as follows. The thing-in-itself cannot be asserted if it is asserted to be simply unknowable. That was, we can say, the first point made by Hegel against Kant. But how then do we know it, and in what do we find it? Kant has given an analysis of the phenomenal world, and this analysis implied as its most important part an analysis of acts of the mind through which the phenomenal world is constituted: "The understanding prescribes to nature its laws." The understanding is not part of nature, that is implied here. Nature is a[11] [construct], an intellectual product of the understanding, and not the other way around. The same applies to reason, and of course explicitly to moral reason. So Kant admitted and even proclaimed that an analysis of science and morality leads to the discovery of a sphere which is not phenomenal. Hegel and some people before Hegel took the decisive step: this is the thing-in-itself. The subjectivity which creates the object, which constitutes the object, is the thing-in-itself. Hegel's formula is a modification of Spinoza's formula. Spinoza called the theme of philosophy "the substance," proving in his way that there can be only one "substance." Hegel said: Yes, Spinoza is right in that there can only be one "substance," but he did not know what that substance is. This becomes clear only on the basis of Kant, although Kant himself did not see that. "The substance is the subject": that

is the famous formula of Hegel for his doctrine.[xi] This substance cannot mean (we will see that) that my personal self is the subject of philosophy, because I am a human being with all sorts of irrelevancies like my body around. Nor can it be in my mind, because any mind is extremely foolish and unreasonable, but it can only mean I to the extent that I am thinking. According to Hegel this is never the act of an individual, it is always that of a society, what Hegel calls "a nation." Therefore, the subject can be more nearly expressed as "the spirit of a nation." The "spirits of nations" have an orderly necessary sequence: that is the main theme of his book.[xii] This whole sequence of national spirits, you can say spirits of the human race, this is the substance. That is, again, a very provisional and superficial formula which we must make much more specific later.

One can also state Hegel's solution of this problem as follows. Spinoza had spoken of a substance which had two attributes: extension and thinking. Prior to Hegel, Schelling transformed this doctrine in the following way. God, the substance, manifests himself on two planes, spatially and temporally. The spatial manifestation of God is nature, and the temporal manifestation of God is history. This is a kind of crude divination of what Hegel later on says, but there is another point of similarly formal character which is of crucial importance. I have referred to Spinoza's book titled *Ethics Demonstrated in a Geometric Manner*—demonstrated scientifically. The textbooks of Christian Wolff, that lion of the German school of the eighteenth century, are all entitled "Such and Such Scientifically Demonstrated, or Scientifically Treated": for instance, his *Doctrine of the Soul, Scientifically Treated*. But it would be quite interesting for a modern-day scientist or psychologist to look at this "science." You see, science can mean very different things.

But this concern with the scientific treatment, which at times meant deductive treatment, was infinitely increased in German Idealism. When Kant speaks of the "categories," one of the great subjects of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he is confronted with the fact that we have the Aristotelian categories. That won't do! Why not? Because Aristotle simply enumerated them, he says; but the first thing is of course the thing-in-itself about which we speak, which is what is meant by "the substance." And the thing-in-itself is somewhere and sometime, and it has qualities and relations, and it is at some time. That is so. And if someone should say to Aristotle, "But look, maybe you missed something," he would probably answer, "Show me what I missed and I will add it!" Just as in the *Ethics* he enumerates these ten or eleven virtues, and quite a few are missing that one could perhaps think of, yet not the slightest attempt is made to deduce [them]. That is quite so. Aristotle would deal with the objection in this empirical manner: "I forgot something? Where is it?" and this would then be argued out. For Kant's scientific demands this is utterly impossible; it has to be shown, to be scientifically demonstrated, that there can only be these and these categories—a deduction of the categories in this sense.

Somewhat differently stated, this became after Kant—in Fichte, but implied in Kant and reaching its climax in Hegel—a new dogmatism, which was a word which played a great

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[xi] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), par. 37.

[xii] Strauss is most likely referring to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* here.

role throughout the history of philosophy but it took on an entirely different meaning after Kant. Fichte understands by dogmatism that one accepts nothing as given. Everything must be deduced. For example, Spinoza says the substance has two attributes: cogitation or thinking, and extension. He doesn't deduce extension, he doesn't deduce thought: there *is* thought, there *is* extension, and he arrived at it presumably by analyzing all phenomena which we know and found that they can finally be reduced in the last analysis to either thought or extension. That is so. But no, that is impossible! That is unscientific, whereas the scientific method of the seventeenth century was Euclidian in the sense that it accepted certain principles—axioms, you can say—as irreducible, as no longer in need of any deduction, the German Idealists, especially after Kant, demanded a strictly and literally presuppositionless science: philosophy. And Hegel's *Logic* is the greatest attempt ever made to do such a thing. To overstate it for the sake of clarity, he tried to begin with absolute nothing and to show how, out of nothing, with absolute evident necessity, everything comes into being. I do not give a caricature, as though it were a somewhat unqualified presentation.

Now I believe it is necessary to repeat this statement in a more concrete way and also in a more narrow way by raising the question of what was the situation facing Hegel within political philosophy. But before I turn to that, I would like to know if there is any point where you think I should make it clearer. Yes?

Student: On the moral teaching of Kant, the postulate of practical reason, I don't quite understand what we said there.

LS: I will try to state it as simply as I can: you have to do your duty, regardless of any ifs or buts because it is your duty, period! One can state Kant's view of this point perhaps as follows. A man who asks why he should be decent is already no longer decent. There is no way of deducing morality from anything outside of morality; any deduction from anything outside of morality is already an admission of indecency. Kant in this respect really expresses what we imply in our moral judgments. This single-minded and absolute dedication—"Between heaven and earth there is no support," as Kant puts it[xiii]—is not enough, because we cannot help wondering regarding the relation of duty or virtue and happiness. There is nothing whatever implied about your happiness in the fact that you are morally obliged to act in this way. But somehow the question as to happiness or the aspiration to happiness seems legitimate to Kant. Therefore, while we know nothing about the overall relation of virtue and happiness, Kant thinks that as moral men we have a moral interest in the agreement, the ultimate agreement, of virtue and happiness. The postulate spells that out. In other words, if there were no God and if there were no immortality of the soul, there could only be something like heroic morality in the face of all odds against it. And this may be so, but as moral men we cannot wish it. That is the meaning, you can say, of Kant's postulates.

Student: And God makes morality necessary?

[xiii] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Akademie edition of Kant's works, 4:425.

LS: No, God makes this convergence of morality and happiness possible in another life, only that. This Kant-fostered doctrine was immediately abolished, so to speak, by all his successors because they felt that if morality is what Kant says it is, then you shouldn't need any . . . you shouldn't even want any outside[12] [praise]. But for Kant himself, this is true. And there are other, deeper reasons into which I will not go now because the question inevitably arises of what is the overall relation between the field of our actions, individually and socially, and nature, the phenomenal world. This great question is of course indispensable to Kant, and one to which he developed much of his thought. This is also very relevant to Hegel. But I have to stop at some point, otherwise I would have to give a lecture—five lectures—on Kant.

Student: Do I understand you to say that the postulates of practical reason are what a good man would wish to occur, rather than what he knows could occur?

LS: Yes. The auxiliary verbs are not too good, I admit that, because it is far more than a mere wish. It is his *duty* to wish that. That, I think, is a fair statement of what Kant means. They are assertions which are theoretically unsupportable but which are practically, i.e., morally necessary. In simple terms, they are those things which a man is under obligation to wish that they should be, not more. There is no demonstration for the postulates. You can put it this way: Man lives in complete darkness. For practical purposes he has light; he can till the soil, he can watch the sun, he can develop a fantastic science. That Kant knows, but it is still darkness because it is only phenomenal. That is genuine, and the thing-in-itself, nothing else. That is what Kant teaches.

Student: The significant contribution of Spinoza's thought to Hegel's metaphysics, then, is the primacy of substance?

LS: Yes, this "monism," as we call it. Now I turn again to this other question, where I have to be a bit more detailed. Again I remind you of the situation prior to Kant: again a conflict between two schools of thought which were called at that time the socialists and the anti-socialists. This has nothing to do with the present age, nothing whatever. They were all strongly in favor of private property. "Socialist" was a name given to those who said that man is by nature social, and the anti-socialists were those who said that man is not by nature social. Clearly the socialists were the old-fashioned people. At the back of them you see Aristotle and of course Thomas Aquinas, the more conservative people. The anti-socialists were chiefly the non-academic people. Of course in the eighteenth century that had filtered down to the academic floor, but the originators were wholly non-academic men: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau. For convenience sake , and I think with some foundation in fact, I suggest this distinction: the two opposed doctrines were the traditional, or premodern, or natural right doctrine; and the specifically modern natural right doctrine. I will merely enumerate the most striking differences.

In the traditional doctrine, especially in Thomas, it is clear that duty comes before right. Rights are derived from duties. Be familiar with the view that the "rights of man" understood as a fundamental fact was regarded as a nonsensical distinction, since rights and duties were regarded as necessarily correlative. That is not so simple. For example, if

you take the traditional theological doctrine, God has rights, but certainly no duties! And there are other cases of which one might think. But, however this may be, it makes all the difference in the world as to where you place the emphasis—whether you place it on the duties or on the rights. And here there is a very clear difference between the two schools.

Secondly, the modern doctrine presents itself as a doctrine primarily of the "state of nature"—[xiv]

—state of nature and state of grace. And there are other states too, into which I will not go. The state of nature is either the state of pure nature or the state of corrupt nature. That was the traditional distinction. Hobbes replaces it, and Locke and Rousseau simply follow him, and quite a few other lesser men. There is a state of nature, and then there is a state of civil society. Do you see the radical distinction? Men living in society—not Christians, but pagans of one kind or another—would live in a state of nature according to the older doctrines because they do not live in a state of grace; but they would of course live in the state of civil society according to the moderns. You see the difference immediately. Hobbes abolishes the difference between pure nature and corrupt nature, and for this reason he doesn't need the state of grace: there is no corruption, there are only inconveniences, and these inconveniences are taken care of by the individual's entry into society. In other words, the doctrine of the state of nature is only a polite way of expressing the break with biblical and theological understanding and is characteristic of this school. I know that historians are putting talk of "states of natures" into Epicurus and Lucretius and I don't know where else, but they do this out of thoughtlessness—they don't read—because there is nothing about the state of nature in Lucretius, of course. The state of nature according to Lucretius would be the state in which an Epicurean philosopher finds himself; that would be Lucretius's state of nature. And this of course is not what the moderns mean by state of nature, because the Epicurean philosopher presupposes the existence of a civil society of which he is a somewhat dubious member.

The third difference between the two types of natural right is this: the traditional doctrine was not mathematical or geometric or deductive, while the modern doctrine was mathematical or deductive. This was very clear to see in Hobbes himself, and if one reads Locke with some care, and especially if he considers the passages on this subject in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, one will see that Locke too took it for granted that the proper form of presenting the natural law teaching is deductive or geometric.

The fourth and last point, which is perhaps the most important point, is this. The modern natural right doctrine includes and culminates in the doctrine of natural constitutional law. There is no natural constitutional law in the tradition. Such doctrines as the doctrine of sovereignty of the social contract in Rousseau's development, and of course Locke's *Civil Government* and Hobbes's *Leviathan*, are all doctrines of the just order of political society, of the rights and duties of governors and subjects, of the people as people and the citizen. These political problems, these constitutional problems, are the chief content of the modern natural law teachings. These were, to put it mildly, not the chief concern of

[xiv] The tape was changed at this point.

the traditional natural right doctrines. Now this fight was fought out in the eighteenth century and ended externally in a victory for the modern school. The proof of that victory was of course the French Revolution. This was [proof] only of the external victory, mind you, because we are not entitled to any inference from the victory that the victory was deserved. Now Kant accepts the modern doctrine. He takes over from Rousseau, you can say, with minor modifications, but he is trying to do something entirely new. He is trying to integrate that modern doctrine into the context of a generally moral teaching.

I should have said one little thing before I stopped. The doctrine of natural law or natural right is not one little province; according to the thought of the classics it is identical with moral philosophy. Let us not go now into the niceties, which are of no importance. The modern natural right teaching is of course a teaching of morality as a whole, as you see very clearly in Hobbes—and also in Rousseau and Locke, where it is a bit obscure but fundamentally the same thing—but it is a moral teaching of a hedonistic or utilitarian kind, as I believe is generally admitted. The traditional natural law teaching is not hedonistic or utilitarian; it is guided by the idea of the perfection of man's nature. What Kant tries to do is to integrate that modern natural right teaching, a teaching of hedonistic or utilitarian provenance, into a genuinely moral context, i.e., [a] non-hedonistic and non-utilitarian context of morality. And the formula for this is his categorical imperative. That has nothing to do with pleasure and utility; it doesn't depend on human nature or anything given, and it implies—I must really rush now through important things—that the categorical imperative gives a justification for what is called "the dignity of man." For Kant morality consists almost completely in recognizing the dignity of man in every man, including one's self, so that one must behave decently for the sake of the "dignity of man" in one's self. This has perhaps much to do with the religious tradition. That is a long question; it certainly has nothing to do with the hedonistic and utilitarian tradition, which can speak of the "dignity of man" only in a purely figurative or sham-poetic way, not in a serious way.

To "respect every man because of the dignity of humanity in him" leads to grave political consequences which can be reduced to one formula: republicanism, republicanism akin to Rousseau's. This republican society is the only just society, and this means it is a moral command. But here there is an enormous difficulty for Kant. Kant has a vision of a global federation of republics, a League of Nations, or a United Nations, but each of them are constitutional republics as a demand of morality, not of convenience.[xv] All right, but we try to be honest men, and we live in Romania of the eighteenth century: What do we do? We will make a revolution! No! Kant says: No, the just society is a moral duty, but to obey the powers that be is also a moral duty. Kant's construction is very neat. If you want to make a revolution you must conspire, but you cannot conspire without lying, so when you are asked where you are going, [do] you say: I am going to a meeting of the conspiracy? Hardly! You rather say: I'm taking my dog for a walk. But this is morally speaking a lie, and since lying is absolutely forbidden, Kant makes revolution morally impossible.

[xv] See Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in *Kant's Political Writings*, 98-108.

We start from this problem in order to understand Kant's moral philosophy. The conclusion seems to be clear: the just society, this global federation of republics, can be actualized only by the accident of wise princes who abolish themselves, as it were, in favor of republics. In other words, the consequence would be, to use present-day language, unhistorical Platonism: you hope and pray that this will happen. Not so, Kant! Kant is much too modern to be satisfied with this. How then do we get the just society, if we can never get it by moral means? (By the way, this is not too bad a formula for the problem which Hegel tries to solve in his *Philosophy of History*.) Prior to Kant, people like Hobbes had said that we will get the rational society by enlightenment. The rational society, the just society, has its foundation in the fear of violent death; if all the necessary conclusions are drawn from the fact that every human being fears violent death, we will get the rational or just society. The fear of violent death is very powerful, but it is threatened by the fear of what Hobbes calls "powers invisible." But to state this is already to state a solution, i.e., get rid of the fear of the "powers invisible." And how do you do that? That's simple: enlighten people. Tell them that the "powers invisible" are not so powerful as they think. Enlightenment will solve the problem.

Yet this was a very superficial view. The difficulty was seen especially by Rousseau in the following way. Rousseau agrees with Hobbes that men enter society out of fear of violent death or, which is only the other formula, for the sake of self-preservation. And the right society is the one which is fully in accord with the fact that our fundamental urge, and hence our most fundamental right, is of course the right to self-preservation and nothing else. But the trouble is, Rousseau thinks, that as soon as men enter society they became changed. Self-love, desire for self-preservation, cedes to what he calls *amour proper*, vanity, desire for power, prestige, unnecessary luxury, and so on. Society, in other words, is dialytic: it makes men oblivious of the end for the sake of which they entered society for which they made it. Society will make men willing subjects of despots who supply men with bread and circuses. From this point of view, that is the mistake of these earlier thinkers. You can have self-preservation, which of course means bread; but in addition, since men are easily bored, you also need circuses. You can have a kind of low and despicable despotism, but no man in his senses would say that this is a satisfactory solution. Enlightenment is not enough. Therefore, the powers which determine social man—love of gain, desire for dominion, and so forth—must compel man to move toward the just society. Only under such conditions is a just society real or in the process of realization.

Please understand the problem. There is always the simple solution of Plato, which lingered on until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where you have the real life and the ideal, and the main point is that it is [an] accident as to whether or not the just order is realized. You can only hope or pray, in the words of Plato, for the actualization of the ideal; there is no inherent necessity for it. But these modern men wanted to have a guarantee for this, and the first formula was "enlightenment." Once people know what the ideal is, this knowledge will actualize the ideal because men act on their knowledge and the knowledge spreads and becomes public opinion, and public opinion is already social reality: the gulf is bridged. That is too simple according to Rousseau, and especially according to Kant, because society itself prevents, in a way, its own

improvement: society produces things in men which make men lazy, unwilling to change. How is it then possible?

Now let us see what Kant says. Kant says we have these passions which are the reason of all the misery we do to one another—the *amour propre*, love of glory, love of wealth, and so on—so let us look at how it works. In the first place, this *amour propre*—how should I translate this, so as not always to use a foreign word? "Vanity" is a bit too narrow; perhaps "desire for wealth and power." [This] desire for wealth and power leads to the generation, to the production of wealth and comfort and all the refinements or elegancies of civilized life. That is one part. But the same power also leads to discord, to crime, and to all the terrible things. How is a solution possible? Kant says that this is very simple because this very discord means of course war, and wars become ever more costly, so people became ever more civilized, more humane, became ever more averse to soldiering. Furthermore, the globe becomes too small. Kant knew already these things; he developed this. In other words, mere selfishness, the same thing which inspires a man to corner the market or to drive his competitor to jump from the Rockefeller building, or whatever it may be, these same motives of shrewd, mean calculation will lead, say, Mr. Khrushchev at a certain point to be in favor of perpetual peace. We don't need morality; that is a crucial point in Kant, of course, and you will recognize it in a modification in Hegel. But don't forget that this perpetual peace, this global federation of republics, [13][is] the goal of a compulsory process. Morality doesn't enter in here at all.

But one could say: Is not man endowed with a free will? Could he not resist a progress toward this final state? Could he not resist that on grounds of inherited loyalties and whatnot? To which Kant says: No, men cannot resist that, because even if he is a low calculator, a completely amoral man, his calculation will tell him that he must give in. [Just] as people argue that whatever Southern people may think about segregation or desegregation, the international situation of the United States forces the United States to give equal rights to the colored people, and therefore it has nothing to do with morality: it is simply a calculation of how to keep the United States as strong as possible. Man cannot resist this trend because freedom is moral freedom, which means it is freedom for morality and not for immorality. Morality commands the public to perpetual peace! It is a real beauty. The just society, which is demanded by morality at all times, like this Platonic scheme, is necessitated in our age by intelligent immorality. The immoral fools, [14]Kant implies, can be ignored because they will always be fooled by their betters, meaning by the *clever* immoral men. Immoral man is commanded in the direction of the just society. Every honest man, Kant says, must wish this development in the direction of the United Nations glorified, and immoral man is driven into it by his very immorality. Isn't that a beauty?

We are almost to Hegel. One more step. There is a little difficulty for Kant which has disappeared for Hegel: the necessary and compulsory progress is only the progress of institutions, of the external, of what Kant calls legality; it is not a progress of morality. Khrushchev doesn't become a bit more decent if he sees that the nuclear war doesn't pay; he is the same crook, but he acts a bit more rationally, externally. Morality is always the free choice of the individual. There exists a possibility—this is the culmination of this

thesis—of a perfectly just society in which not a single member is a just man. Kant says so. For the establishment of a rational or just society you don't need a nation of angels, as people traditionally said; a nation of devils would do, provided they were shrewd calculators.[xvi] In other words, institutional progress, progress towards these united republics, is of the greatest moral relevance. Therefore, Kant could sketch a philosophy of history [in] a writing of fifteen pages or so, but he could only sketch it, not elaborate it, because he felt that the institutional progress, while being of the greatest moral relevance, is something radically different from moral progress, and moral progress is the only thing which ultimately counts.

Now here we are at the step of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. One can state Hegel's criticism of Kant as follows: Kant is the most severe moralist that ever was, but his very moralism drives him into immorality. Think of the statement about the nation of devils. Is it not shocking that this should be a moral society? Another example is his definition of marriage, which verges on the obscene.[xvii] Hegel rightly said that if this is morality . . . But most important, perhaps, is this consideration which Kant admitted, and not entirely by accident, that this morality is not entirely a matter of the isolated man in his little room; it has something to do with the society in which he lives. More precisely, Kant went so far as to say that *pure* morality, without any calculation of divine or human compensation, presupposes moral philosophy, and more particularly, Kant's moral philosophy. And on the other hand, he also said that once his moral philosophy spreads, it is bound to influence the actual morality of the people. There is nothing immoral about that, but it means that freedom—in this case intellectual freedom, Kant's thinking, but also moral freedom because it is not only wise but moral to publish his moral books—is a part of that necessary process. You do not merely have the foxes and tigers fighting it out in the marketplace: there are the philosophers there also; there are even ordinary men there. Ordinary men are a part of this process, and each makes his free choice morally, surely, but this coming together is no longer a matter of this or that man's free choice but of an overriding and intelligible necessity. And freedom is a part of that necessity, an essential part, and that is what Hegel says. Therefore Kant's hesitation regarding a philosophy of history is based on his distinction regarding legality and morality, according to which the two things are almost entirely separate, and Hegel denies that. If it is true, as Kant says, that[15] [only in] the way of institutions the just society is necessary, then don't bother about morality; the morality will always be there because there have always [been] and there will always be men who are decent, and the thing to change is much less the individual private morality than the institutions in which they live; and therefore there is a harmonious and not a disharmonious solution as there was in Kant. Hence the historical process is a meaningful rational process, and Hegel wrote three thousand pages in order to prove it.

I add one more remark as a kind of suggestion. From Hegel's point of view, Kant was still too close to the philosophy of the Enlightenment, to the philosophy leading up to the

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[xvi] Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 112.

[xvii] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 96. Kant defines marriage as "the union of two persons of different sexes for lifelong possession of each other's sexual attributes."

French Revolution. Hegel was inspired by Plato and Aristotle's political philosophy much more than was Kant, and it was ultimately Plato and Aristotle who taught him of this reconciliation between morality and politics, of this kinship between the good man and the good citizen. That is very true, but we must not forget for one moment the enormous gulf between Hegel on the one hand, and Plato and Aristotle on the other. Hegel repeats, indeed, what Plato and Aristotle did, but on the basis of the modern development. There had been a contradicting opposite doctrine which was developed by Hobbes-Locke-Rousseau, and from Hegel's point of view his doctrine is the synthesis of Plato-Aristotle on the one hand, and of Hobbes-Locke-Rousseau on the other.

One could indicate the difference in various ways. Of course Hegel pointed out, he shouted aloud, in his books about the . . . rights of man in Plato-Aristotle and the rights of man in modern times, but for the moment I would like to mention something much less visible and less conspicuous, and that is this. In one of his earlier writings, an essay, Hegel translated relatively long passages from Plato's *Statesman*, and with great approval and great admiration.[xviii] The translation is all right, but there is one change which he constantly makes: wherever Plato speaks of the *polis*, or the city, Hegel makes him speak of *das Volk*, the nation. This is settled to begin with for Hegel without any question. Without any question, the political society cannot be a *polis*; it must be a nation, a community united by a language, and of course government and so on.

I think there are many more points which one could make, but I believe I will leave it at this. Our time is up, which of course is not sufficient reason for closing the meeting, so if there are any questions which you would like to bring up, we can stay here for a while.

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[1] Deleted "presentative"
[2] Deleted "up"
[3] Deleted " for the rational"
[4] Deleted "likewise to recognize as real, equally"
[5] Deleted "it"
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[7] Deleted "man"
[8] Deleted "and"
[9] Deleted "in"
[10] Deleted "any"
[11] Deleted "constitute"
[12] Deleted "prose"
[13] Deleted "are"
[14] Deleted "this is what"
[15] Deleted "on"

[xviii] Hegel, *Natural Law*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 96, 100-1.

Session 2: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —Only one little point, first. I believe it would be proper to translate the word by "Germanic," because what Hegel really has in mind is not his own nation but the nations which emerged after the migration, the Christian nations of Europe. Caricatures have been drawn of Hegel in which he is God knows what, but narrow German nationalism is certainly not *a propos* of Hegel. But that is a minor point.[ii]

As to the great problems which you raised, it was certainly legitimate to start from Aristotle and Christian theology, because that is the way in which Hegel ordinarily presented his own position. In the *Phenomenology of Mind* he quotes a passage from the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics* where God is presented as intelligence intellecting itself.[iii] Yes? But since in your presentation it appeared that Hegel is closer to Christian theology than to Aristotle, it would be good if you were to state what is the difference between Hegel and Christian theology. Assuming that your interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity is perfectly in accordance with the orthodox Christian teaching, I do not question that now. But assuming that, what would still be the difference, as far as you were able to see from your reading?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Well, Hegel discusses in this section the relation between his view and the Christian view proper. Let us not speculate. Did you get anything out of this discussion? What is the difference between the Christian teaching of the Church, say, the Christian Lutheran Church, and Hegel's book? There is a difference. Hegel doesn't quote Scripture, for instance. He occasionally alludes to biblical passages, but he never proves any assertion of his by quoting a verse from Scripture. So there is some difference.

Student: You mean the "knowledge of God, which is not possible in man"?

LS: I understand what you mean, but I wonder if there are many here who also understand it.

Student: Well, as I understand Christian theology, the only time you can know God is in the of afterlife, so Hegel decided that God reveals Himself . . .

LS: But how does the Christian "know" God in this life? What is the Christian word for this awareness of God which man has in this life?

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[i] The commentary in this session appears under session 12 in the original typescript. Insofar as it deals with material from the introduction to *The Philosophy of History*, it clearly belongs earlier in the course.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[iii] Hegel quotes from book 12 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* at the end of the *Philosophy of Mind*, §577.

Student: You mean faith?

LS: Yes. And what does Hegel do with faith?

Student: He destroys it.

LS: "Destroys" is a somewhat one-sided expression. He "transposes" Christianity from the mode of faith into the mode of knowledge. Yes?

Student: But how then did he preserve faith?

LS: It is the content which is preserved, not the mode. The substance is preserved. Whether the substance is really preserved or not is a question which we have to consider, but his claim is that the full content or substance of the faith is preserved, but it has now become knowledge.

Now there is one other point which I would like to clarify before we go into the details. The whole *Philosophy of History* hinges around the particular will and the universality of reason. The historical process is rational because the particular will necessarily becomes a willing of the universal, and therewith becomes a fully rational will. In the fully rational will, you have particularity on the one hand—I, the ego—and you have universality on the other hand, because what I will is the simply rational. And the process is the union of these two things.

Now how can one understand that, without using complicated terminology and by starting from very simple phenomena? Let us start from the simple case of the particular will. A man wants to enjoy himself. Yes? Mr. X, an individual; he doesn't care for anything else. This is the particular will in its crudest form. How in the world can this become necessarily rational in such a way that this transformation is the historical process? You see, if you speak only of the individual, you have the old story that the classical philosophers always described, of the man who is concerned only with his selfish interests and is then enlightened by a wise man about the folly of his undertaking, and only then does his will become rational. That is easy to understand, yes? But Hegel claims that this transition is not possible in any individual; it is possible only in the historical process. How does this work? I will not hold it against you if you do not answer this now, but this is the problem which we have to solve.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, sure; but if we understand what dialectic is, then perhaps we do not have to use the word dialectic. Yes? How does it work? Now let us take this very crude fellow who is only concerned with having a convenient life. In the first place, he wants to eat, he wants to sleep, but he doesn't want to make any effort. What is going to happen to him? A simple thing: he won't get what he wants! If he sleeps all the time and doesn't work, he won't get these amenities, because the life of a hobo is not so very pleasant. Yes? So he

has to do something. The most important thing is that the other fellows will take from him whatever he may have, so the first indispensable condition for anything would be security in the possession of whatever he has acquired already. And that means law. It may be a completely stupid law (we will come to that later), but law as law says something about every subject or every member of a society.

Then something else happens. You cannot put a policeman behind every member of the society, so the law will not be obeyed if a large number of the population regard the law as not deserving to be obeyed. So the law must have some intrinsic authority in order to be law. The word which men use for this is that the law must be thought to be "just." And then you have already a universal standard for that universal: the notions of justice as standards for the universals in existence, the laws. And now we have to do already with universals, with notions of justice. There are *n* notions of justice: a tribe in Africa will have a different notion of justice than an Eskimo tribe, and they will also be different in Persia and China and so on.

Now what Hegel says then is that these various notions of justice which prevail in different societies are of different rank. The old Persian notion of justice implies all the wisdom which was implied in the Bantu notion of justice, and they have already seen the defects of these Bantu notions. Whether that happened externally, whether there was some connection between the Persians and the Bantus, is uninteresting. The Persian notion of justice is deeper and richer and is not exposed to the difficulties to which the Bantu notion would be exposed. And so there is an order, and Hegel contends that this order is of such a nature that there is an unambiguous ascent from the lowest notion of justice which is implied in the most primitive tribes to the highest and final notion. The final notion of justice must be one in which there is complete agreement between the particular will and the universals—a perfect harmony, as you called it. When is that? The perfect harmony is when the state is reached in which every human being wills what all can will. If you take the extreme case, the fellow who wants to merely enjoy himself and does not want to pay any price for that wills something that no one else can possibly will. I mean, can I will that Mr. X should have a good time at my expense and without any obligation on his part? No, certainly not. But there is a state in which every fellow citizen in his right mind wills what every other human being can will—*can* will. That does not mean that there will not always be criminals; that is the difficulty which you brought up at the end of your paper. There is always the possibility of criminals, surely, but it is a clearly and unmistakably defined criminality. When Socrates did what he did, he was in a sense a criminal: he did not believe in the gods worshiped by the city of Athens. But Hegel says that this crime was not a crime in the full sense because Socrates had justly and rightly gone beyond the Greek consciousness, or the city consciousness. But in Hegel's final stage, the deviation can no longer have any justification, and then it is mere crime. So even in the last stage, the individual still has to make his moral choices. No one is necessarily decent. But there is no longer a possibility of ambiguity, as had existed in principle in all the earlier stages.

Student: Well, if this comes about with necessity, in what sense does the individual agree with the law?

LS: Well, for example, look at Mr. Hodge.[iv] Could he not have chosen to be an honest man?

Student: But would that situation be possible in Hegel's sense?

LS: Absolutely! An honest man in a Bantu tribe, an honest man in Periclean Athens, and an honest man in mid-twentieth century in America are, as far as honesty goes, indistinguishable. But the content of that honesty differs greatly. For example, the Athenian as an honest man could own slaves, but the twentieth-century American cannot own slaves without getting into conflict with the law. So the content is different, but the virtue is the same. I exaggerate the problem advisedly, because there is a question as to whether the subjective honesty, from Hegel's point of view, is at all possible in the earlier stages of the development. But this question requires already certain refinements, so let us disregard that for a moment. Do you see this? And therefore the process necessarily requires a notion of justice leading from Periclean Athens to the notion of justice prevailing in twentieth-century America. But what is not necessary in this sense is the choice of the individual.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Well, if it is man's nature to be free in this sense, then any social order in which there are some men who are not free is unjust. But this could not have been understood in an earlier stage. It came to be understood only as a consequence of Christianity, as Hegel puts it. More precisely, it comes of the secularization of Christianity. That is a special point. But now there is no question any more. The concrete meaning is that any caste society, any society in which there doesn't exist perfect freedom of opportunity for every individual, is not a free society in Hegel's sense. This doesn't mean equality of suffrage, for Hegel; we will see that later. The main point is a society in which no one is barred by law from choosing his profession, and in which the assignment of jobs is done entirely on the grounds of merit and not on anything else. That is the practical meaning of freedom, you can say. And needless to say, there are other implications: there cannot be arbitrary justice—which is injustice—and there must be laws, and so on. We will come to this later.

But now let us turn to the text. Here I make one remark. Since about twenty or thirty years ago, some German scholars have begun to edit Hegel's lectures especially, and the *Philosophy of History* in particular, so you get a much larger book now. The text in German is now a thousand pages long, and the English text you have here is five hundred pages long. And there is a particularly striking difference at the beginning, because the first section of the German text is four times as long as the English text.[v] I have read it in

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[iv] Orville Hodge was Auditor of Public Accounts in Illinois from 1952-1956, during which time he embezzled $6.15 million of state funds.

[v] Strauss here refers to the four-volume edition of the lectures edited by Georg Lasson and published in 1917-20; see G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, Zweite Hälfte (Bände 2-4), ed. Georg Lasson (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988). In 1955 Johannes

the German, of course, and quite a few important things are missing from the English. You cannot blame the older editors, nor the English translators, because these new editions were made on the basis of lecture notes which were not sufficiently known when the first editions were made shortly after Hegel's death.

Now Hegel begins his discussions by making a distinction between three kinds of viewing history in order to make clear what he is doing. His approach to history is philosophical, but the philosophical approach is distinguished by Hegel from two other approaches which he calls the "original historiography" and the "reflexive or reflecting historiography," both of which are inferior in intelligence to the philosophic form. Now what are these other two? The "original" one, which is a bit overstated by Hegel, is the contemporary actor who puts down what he has done and understands best. Churchill would be a contemporary example of this. Hegel's examples are Thucydides and Caesar, and he speaks of certain French writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well.

The main point is not that the historian himself was an actor, but that the spirit of the author and the spirit of the actions are identical. If Thucydides had been only a private citizen who lived on his farm, he still would have fulfilled the condition, because his soul was in perfect empathy with the city of Athens. There is no stepping out of the world of action in this type of history. The objectives and the sentiment of the historian and the objectives and sentiment of the actors are identical. One could say that this is prescientific and prephilosophic historiography. Thucydides is concerned with the presentation and the greatness of Athens as much as any other Athenian, or as much as the city of Athens acting collectively. The identity of the objectives and the sentiments are the same in Thucydides and in the city of Athens. Hegel says we cannot really understand the sentiments of other times. Who can really understand what was going on in the mind of a troubadour when he addressed his lady, or in the mind of an Athenian when he spoke of admiring the beauty of some young boy? There are definite limits to empathy, although there is perfect understanding possible according to Hegel regarding their universal principles. The crucial point, I repeat, is the identity of the sentiment and the objectives of the historian and of the actor. If an American writes a history of France, there cannot be an identity of the objectives because he cannot be a French patriot. He can love France, but he cannot be a French patriot. That is something entirely different.

The second form of history is what Hegel calls "reflecting history." This is no longer limited to the contemporary, but is in principle universal or, to use Hegel's term, "abstract." Reflecting history transcends the experience, the living together with, of the historian, and it stays there. The spirit of the author differs from the spirit of the actors. One example would be someone who writes a universal history. He is obviously not a contemporary of all times. Livy, writing a Roman history from the foundation of the city to the time of Augustus, cannot be an original historian, so that must be reflecting history.

Hoffmeister published a revised version of Lasson's first volume, containing Hegel's introduction to the lectures; see G.W.F. Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1955).

Livy cannot feel and fully sympathize with the Roman Council or Tribune of the plebs of the fourthth or fifth century.

And there are other forms of this history. One form which Hegel particularly loathed was [written by] what he called the "moralistic critics," meaning people who have complete lack of concern with the objectives of the people studied and who have no responsibility whatever. They just look at and apply to these acts a mechanical moral catalogue that is also from the outside of the period. But Hegel's criticism is not limited to these moralists; the mere compilers or the universal historians are of the same kind. He gives one example which would be interesting to those who know anything of the nineteenth century. For Hegel, one specimen of this reflecting history would be Ranke. You know that Ranke was regarded as the greatest German historian, and in a way the greatest historian of the nineteenth century altogether. And Ranke was the man who originated the modern critical history: the use of archives and so forth. Hegel has real contempt for Ranke because Ranke wrote a history of the French, and a history of the popes, and so on, without ever having transcended this being with the actors. On the highest level, there is a return to the being with the actors, on the philosophic level of which I will speak later.

To repeat: the characteristic of this reflecting history is that the spirit of the historian differs from that of the actors. The reflecting historian has a universal purpose, say of morality, or he may be concerned with establishing universal laws of history, or he may also be trying to find out something about human nature in general. All of these are universal categories approaching the past, the phenomena, from without. Much of the traditional historiography had this character of reflecting history. That is to say few of these were original writers like Thucydides and Caesar; most of them were such broad writers of universal history. This use was based on a certain notion of the use of history. You will find this on page 6, in the center. Here Hegel repeats some commonplaces which go back to antiquity.

Student: "It may be allowed that examples of virtue . . . teaching which experience offers in history."

LS: You know that was really a commonplace from classical antiquity on.

Student: "But what experience and history . . . connected with itself, and itself alone."[vi]

That is only part of Hegel's criticism of reflecting history, but you can see why this is "reflecting" history, because the idea is to derive universal norms of either a moral or of an expediential kind. And this is impossible according to Hegel. The universality which we as thinking beings must be concerned with cannot be of this nature.

I mention only this subdivision which Hegel makes in the reflecting history: either it is compilation, the putting together of all times; or it is pragmatic—it tries to show the inner connection of the actions in such a way that we can learn prudence from it; or it is critical

[vi] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 6. The ellipses show that the passage has been abridged.

history, which came to the forefront in the nineteenth century, especially through men like Ranke, and in which you have a criticism of the texts as to whether the information is reliable and so on, and for which Hegel has almost nothing but contempt. Hegel thinks that the traditions are reliable as far as the main points are concerned, and whether you know that a particular pope was elected by intrigues starting with Cardinal A or with Cardinal B is not something which can be of serious interest to serious people. He really despises this kind of higher criticism completely. In this respect he was very old-fashioned.

And now we come to the third form of history, which is the philosophical history. The philosophical history has in common with the reflecting history that it is universal, and it has something in common with the original history in that it is not abstract. Now what can that mean? There is one passage on this in the English translation, and we can read that on page 1, first paragraph.

Student: "The subject of this course of lectures . . . not a collection of general observations—"

LS: That is not good! "Not general recollections" would be better, since that is the key word.

Student: "suggested by the study of its records, and proposed to be illustrated by its facts."[vii]

LS: Yes. "Taken from its content as if there were examples," but from the content of universal history itself. What he implies is this: the original history has to do with the content; and the reflecting history uses the content in order to arrive at universal laws; and the philosophical history has, again, to do with the content. Let me try to state it in simpler terms. The original history deals with individual human beings, individual nations, individual political societies; the reflecting history uses this individual phenomena as material, but only in order to ascend from there to the rules of universal action or to universal laws; and the philosophic history has, again, to do with the content. The original historian always uses individual names, proper names, like Pericles, Athens, Thebes, or whatever. The reflecting historian also uses names, but only as a quarry, as material, and what he is driving at is universal laws in which no proper names can occur. So the content of history is only material for the reflective historian, it is not his theme. For the philosophic historian the content is again the theme. Universal history as Hegel understands it cannot be written without the use of proper names. Proof: the table of contents—Persia, Greece, Rome. The contents of history.

I will read to you a few passages which do not occur in the English translation: "History has in front of itself the most concrete object, that which comprises all the different aspects of existence within itself. The individual with which philosophic history is concerned is the world mind. Philosophic history has to do with the individual."[viii] And

[vii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 1.
[viii] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 33.

there are other expressions of the same kind occurring again and again. And when he speaks of the *Volksgeist*, the folk mind, as people say—"the mind of a nation" would be a better translation—it is of course a mind which can only be found by designating it with a name, say, Norwegian. And this is not to be transcended but is the content of history. So the "world mind" is, superficially stated, the sequence of these individual nation minds, each of which has a proper name; and therefore the "world mind" is as individual as its elements. Another way of putting it, in the case of reflecting history, is that the universal is beyond history. If someone derives a certain law of civilization, or a static or dynamic sociology or whatever it may be, then the universal is beyond history even if it is found out by studying historical materials. The original history is not concerned with universals at all. And the philosophic historian finds the universals within history itself.

I wonder whether this point is clear to you. It is absolutely crucial for the understanding of Hegel. May I say one thing: this distinguishing of three forms of history conforms to a very general Hegelian schematism. We live first in a world of unreflected experience. We do our jobs, our duties, or we do not do them, but it is still the same elements, the same climates. We live in an element in which we understand everything adequately for the purpose of doing our jobs. Then reflection arises which is destructive of that naiveté. But naiveté does not mean stupidity or childishness for Hegel; it means a very high degree of intelligence, but completely within the world, within your world, narrower or broader, but you do not try to take a stand outside of the world. Then men begin to take a stand outside of the world, and the most important form of that is science. Science in Hegel's sense belongs to reflection; and then you have indeed a clarity, a precision, an exactness, but you have lost touch with things and therefore you get a wrong picture. The very exact picture of reality which you get at this stage is, by virtue of its very exactness, a wrong picture, a one-sided picture. And then there is a higher stage of thinking, the highest, which is when you have recovered the reality, the substantiveness of the primary understanding, and at the same time you surpass in thoughtfulness the reflective. This is philosophy!

Student: In the return to the first stage of the history by the philosophic history, is the return in some way the return to the identity of the spirit of the author and the spirit of the actor?

LS: Yes. That is a very essential point, and I should have said that. But in what way is this done? For example, if Hegel writes a philosophy of history, as he does here, he obviously is not a contemporary of the Persians or the Greeks or the Romans. How can this identity be? This will perhaps become clearer later on. The contents of the philosophy of history are the principles of justice of the different societies, let me say. Now these principles of justice—*principles*, not the particular institutions, or the particular battles or wars—of all these different cultures are now my business, because my understanding of the rights of man is no understanding at all if I do not see it as a culmination of what mankind always was groping after and which has finally been achieved in this understanding. So there is again identity. You are quite right. Identity of the spirit of the philosophic historian and the spirit of the men of the past is again achieved here. We must be interested in the Greek principle of justice because it is part

and parcel of our own notion of justice. We cannot be concerned with the battle of Marathon as Marathon equally, yes? That was a vital question for the Greeks in the year 490, and in a way it remained a vital question for as long as they preserved their liberty, but it cannot be of immediate concern for us. I advisedly use this very vague term "principles of justice" for indicating the universal. We shall see what the authentic Hegelian term for that is later on in the course.

One could raise an interesting question here, but I wonder if we have time for it. I will only suggest it as a subject for your reflection. When Hegel had an overpowering influence in Germany and derivatively also in the United States, England, and France, there was an equally powerful and externally more powerful reaction against him by the scientific historians and by the scientists themselves, naturally. That is well known. But the only man who took up the problem of history on the level of Hegel was Nietzsche, about forty years after Hegel's death. Nietzsche's writing is called *Of the Use and Abuse of History* and is, one could say, the beginning of a reply to Hegel. Nietzsche also made a distinction between three kinds of history. Does anyone remember that? Monumental, antiquarian, and critical. That is of course something quite different from Hegel's distinction between original, critical, and philosophic history, and it is quite good to clarify this for oneself by contrasting these two attempts to make such distinctions of [the] kinds of history. But we don't have time for that now.

Now there is time to clear up any point which we have made, so if there is any question, then mention it. Otherwise, I will go on because we have to cover a lot of ground.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: According to Hegel, yes. I will come back to your question. There is one little point I would like to make here about the translator, who always translates the German word *Geist* as "spirit." I would not do that. I would translate it as "mind," because it makes Hegel sound much more "spiritualistic" than he really is. This is only because of the undertones of the word "spirit," so perhaps it is a wiser translation. For Hegel there is no question that there is a "spirit of the mind." Why do you ask that question?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: I think that you underestimate Hegel's sophistication. How could one answer to that?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Oh no, let us not do this schematic thing. Let us say there are two extreme poles in a given situation, in a given age, yes? And then there are all kinds of things in between, a whole rainbow. But Hegel would contend that the "spirit of the age" is that rainbow, and all the oppositions taking place take place within a common framework. If you take a present-day democratic liberal, a communist, a crypto-fascist, a Catholic, and a Muslim, Hegel would say that there are differences, of course, but there is something going through all of them which you would not find in the preceding age. Yes? You must have

heard the words "atomic age," yes? That would be an example of what he means. Whatever differences there may be, there are surely some very great differences, everyone today is affected by the fact that he lives in the "atomic age" at least in his thought. No one was affected by that in 1910, to say nothing of earlier times. And Hegel would say that this is what really counts, what gives color to every position taken within the age. Of course the concept of the spirit of an age must be questioned, but first one must understand what it means. For example, when Spengler, who popularized certain aspects of Hegel which were perhaps not equally popularized before, gives this notion in his *Decline of the West* about the seventeenth century, where you have [the] baroque, absolute monarchy, a certain kind of music, French classical drama, and all of these have the same spirit. In this point Spengler only said what Hegel meant. There is something common from which no one can run away, Hegel would say, even by opposing it. Your opposition shows there is something and your position is then formed by the opposition to it; therefore you can't run away from it.

But surely we should not subscribe to Hegel's assertion, by no means. We have to examine it. But a certain kind of simplistic positivistic realism does not really come within hailing distance of what Hegel meant. You must not forget that. One can only begin to see the problem by looking back to the past. For example, for Plato or Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas, such a thing as a "spirit of an age" wouldn't exist. When people spoke of the *spiritus seculi* in former times, they meant of course the spirit of this-worldliness, say, the spirit of the devil as distinguished from the spirit of God, the spirit of the world. What would be the English translation of *seculum*, which is a Latin word from which secularized and these words are derived? "This world," as distinguished from the other world? I think the term "spirit of an age" was coined in the seventeenth century.

It is interesting to see that Hegel's authority, so to speak, for this concept is Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, book 19, where he speaks of the general spirit, *l'espirit general*. Montesquieu came to England as a Frenchman and saw that there was an entirely different spirit: for example, the British have spleen and the French do not have spleen; that was one prejudice at that time. And suppose the British have a very good breakfast and a very good tea and a very inferior luncheon, and the French have a very good luncheon and a very inferior breakfast. On every level you see the difference. They have juries in Britain and no juries in France, and so on. That is a very beautiful passage and a crucial one for the development of the concept of the spirit of an age. But for Montesquieu the spirit of an age is the confluence of *n* factors. This is the way a present-day social scientist would go about it, because if he would speak of a spirit of an age he would say there are all kinds of factors—economic, geographic, and so on—which produced this spirit. For Hegel the spirit of an age is not the product of factors but a genuine unity because of its mental, i.e., spiritual, character. Hegel misunderstood Montesquieu in this point, but that is uninteresting as far as we are here concerned.

Student: Suppose there had existed two Hegels at the same time, each writing universal histories, each using the contents of histories to provide universal principles of justice, and then they came up with different principles of justice. What would Hegel have said as to the other man's position?

LS: For Hegel that would be utterly impossible. There could be minor differences of style and the use of different examples, but as far as the substance is concerned it would be impossible. Can you write two textbooks of calculus which are different? One may begin with integration and the other with differentiation, but as far as the substance . . .

Student: But human life is not calculus and . . .

LS: Surely not; but as far as substance . . . You must not forget one thing: Hegel's rationalism is unsurpassed and unrivaled; as far as universal certainty goes, he wouldn't cede in any way to mathematics. What he would say is this . . . He was a very good knower of the human heart, and he would say that if a very gifted man would come up, he would be compelled by the truth to see that Hegel was right—he would write it in a different way, perhaps, but the substance would be the same. This could happen. There could also be a priority thing, which existed in a way . . . By the way, Schelling did—or at least began what Hegel completed, and there was a certain rivalry between them. But that is only interesting to individuals at the time. After they are dead, people speak about the issue without partisanship, or without this kind of partisanship, and then it would come out.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Well, if the whole subject is done on a lower level, or if it is a limited subject. For example, the history of the Reformation by a Protestant and by a Catholic will always differ. Is that not true?

Student: I think that two Protestants writing about the Reformation could be just as well different if they use just source material and don't use secondary works. If they just use the same material, they may systematically come up with very different conclusions about the same material.

LS: Hegel's formula is "Truth is totality," and therefore any partial presentations of a subject are necessarily untrue and therefore has a necessarily accidental character. So if you study only the Reformation, you can have *n* presentations of the Reformation, each of which has its particular merit, and the only way of the truth would be of universals. There are important things which Hegel would of course admit. For instance, if one man were a plagiarist and never did decent work and another man does decent work, that would show; and also imagination or lack of it would show. But the whole effort there would not be on the highest level. Of course, Hegel's contempt for this kind of empirical study led to his downfall later on, because he said some things in his *Philosophy of History* which were simply untrue. Then people had an easy triumph and said: Look, this man pretends to present the truth and he makes such gross errors. I think there is a story that he said something about crocodiles in the Amazon River, and his general thesis is that the new world is inferior to the old world, and therefore the crocodiles in the

Amazon River are smaller than those in the Nile.[ix] Alexander von Humboldt[x] had seen these crocodiles and assured everyone that they were as big or bigger than those of the Nile. By these things he made himself ridiculous, surely, but one must see how important these things are. One cannot necessarily regard them as settling the whole issue.

Now let me continue. Let us forget now about the prephilosophic ways of human history and limit ourselves to the philosophy of history. That means, Hegel says, simply thinking consideration of world history. As a thinking consideration, it means however that it does not simply depend on the given but construes history *a priori*. This shocking statement is made and meant very seriously by Hegel. This was not his invention; Fichte did this kind of thing before Hegel. A philosophy of history would be an *a priori* construction of history in that the fundamental character of the historical development is understood by understanding the essential character of the mind. But Hegel emphasizes the fact that there is a fundamental contradiction here between the philosophic *a priori* character of the investigation and history proper. After all, history proper is a record of what happened and has to do with the given. More generally stated, there is here a contrast between thinking as a spontaneous act and the dependence of the thinker on what happened. The solution is this: what happened was altogether rational, and therefore by the use of my reason I know what happened because it is rational. This may sound like a joke, but Hegel of course knows what he wants and he states it as follows: "The rationality of history is a part of the assertion that everything is rational." This, Hegel says, has been demonstrated in philosophy itself. In philosophy itself it has been demonstrated that reason is the substance.[xi] Hegel does not presuppose that you believe him. What does philosophy itself mean in terms of books, when Hegel says that?

Student: The *Logic*.

LS: The *Logic*, chiefly, and also the *Phenomenology of Mind*; but mainly he means the *Logic*. But Hegel does not expect that we have understood or digested his *Logic*; he says that the *Philosophy of History*, these lectures, demonstrate this proposition. He proceeds here hypothetically; he approaches history with the hypothesis that it has been rational, and he tells us in advance that he thinks he has been successful. By approaching history with his hypothesis of rationality, we will find that it is sound. So the *Philosophy of History*, beginning with a hypothesis, transforms that hypothesis into the truth. Perhaps you will look on page 13, line 6.

Student: "The science which we plan to treat will supply the proof, not indeed of the truth, but of the correctness of the principle."[xii]

LS: Namely, that reason is the substance and especially the substance of history. You see he makes here a distinction between truth and correctness. What does this mean? The

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[ix] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 200.
[x] Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), a naturalist and explorer who was a major figure in the classical period of physical geography and biogeography.
[xi] Here Strauss encapsulates Hegel's argument on pages 9-10 of *The Philosophy of History*.
[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 13. This alters the translation.

Philosophy of History, this very unpretentious and exoteric part of Hegel's work, proves that as a matter of fact the historical process is rational. It does not prove that it must be rational; that can only be done in philosophy proper.

And then Hegel makes it quite clear that within our present enterprise we must proceed "historically" and, as he adds, "empirically."[xiii] So he claims that in this book he proceeds empirically, and this alone can make it of interest to us: that Hegel claims that an empirical study of the history of the world leads to the realization that reason is the content of the history of the world. But what does "empirical procedure" mean to Hegel? Now there is something which we can learn from him here, I believe. In the first place it means something very necessary—[xiv]

—So let us begin again. The thesis which Hegel developed in these pages is that history is rational because being or reality is rational; and history is the highest stratum, let me say, of that reality. Now here we must make a distinction between two elements: the first is the assertion that being or history is rational; and then there is the application to history. What do we know about the assertion that being or history is rational or intelligible? Is this an innovation by Hegel? I mean nothing farfetched or abstruse, only the manifest things which are written large in any history of philosophy and in any textbook, however inferior. I mean the massive facts like Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire. Well, for Plato and Aristotle, and even earlier, it is understood that being is what is truly intelligible; the unintelligible is only that which is not true being. Parmenides, you can say, begins that. But these older thinkers, these pre-Hegelians, implied that history is not rational, history is not intelligible, when they said that true being is intelligible. Or to state it simply: History doesn't exist. It is impossible to express in Greek the phrase "philosophy of history" in the sense in which we use it today. History meant for the Greeks a certain kind of inquiry which proceeds by asking other people. You know that if you want to find out about the insides of a dog, you have to cut it up; but if you want to find out how things were before you were born, you have to inquire with other human beings. This kind of inquiry with other human beings is more characteristically what the *historia* of the Greeks means—needless to say that if you consult the archives and so on, you consult other human beings. Now history doesn't exist in the sense that it is a dimension of reality. What is the equivalent of that? There are no political orders or regimes which follow each other. This is a sequence which is fundamentally a chance sequence. This is most clearly stated in the fifth book of Aristotle's *Politics* in his polemics against Plato.[xv]

Furthermore, there is another thing which is of the utmost importance for Hegel and that is the nations. The Greek word *ethnos* does not have the emphatic meaning which the word "nations" has in Hegel. It also has the meaning of "tribes." In other words, very often when Aristotle speaks of the word *ethnē* he means "the barbarians," or the "heathens" you could also say—however, this is from a Greek point of view. For Aristotle in particular—and the same is true of Plato as well—there are different nations

[xiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 10.
[xiv] The tape was changed at this point.
[xv] Aristotle, *Politics*, book 5, chapter 12.

with different customs, and they live side by side but there is no principle involved. Nothing is more revealing of Aristotle than when he has to speak of unchangeable principles, the unchangeable principles of right: he says these principles are the same everywhere; he does not say they are always or at all times. He is more concerned with the local variety than with the temporal variety—not that he did not know that, but the side-by-side is somehow more interesting than succession. The reason is not difficult to understand, since our knowledge of other cultures, as we say today, is of course much better if we can travel there and if they are in being now. If they no longer exist, we have to rely on what other people tell us; it is not firsthand knowledge. From this point of view the present side-by-side takes precedence over succession. There does exist a kind of overall unity which would be called the "historical process" by Hegel. If we take, again, an example from writers who are most explicit about it, there is a beginning of civilization and an end, either because the human race has come into being or because the human race has been interrupted, as it were, by cataclysms. So there was physical continuity with the preceding men but no cultural continuity. Both possibilities have been suggested.

Now generally, then, there is an ascent from primitive beginnings, an ascent both in art and in political institutions, but this is necessarily followed by a decay. And to the extent to which there is an overall development, there is this curve—in such a way, though, that the peak of political life does not coincide with the peak of intellectual life. If one studied Aristotle's *Politics* with some care, one would see this very clearly. The perfect, the most divine governments existed in the past; that is to say, the time in which philosophy had not yet reached its peak.

Another piece of evidence for this kind of question is Lucretius, the Roman poet. In his book *On the Nature of Things*, book five, this also appears very clearly. I only try to illustrate a bit what one could call with the somewhat improper expression "the philosophy of history underlying ancient rationalism." History was not rational. There were some certain rational and intellectual strata, as it were, but on the whole accident and chance were of too great an importance to give it any overall rationality.

Now then it is clear that Hegel diverges radically from the ancient rationalists in regard to history. But the question is whether this is compatible with full agreement between Hegel and . . . regarding "being" in general. In other words, in order to make possible the assertion that history is rational, Hegel had to modify the meaning of the traditional thesis that being as being is rational or intelligible. Now in what way did he do that? I shall mention two points which are obvious and of obvious importance.

Now what is "true being" in Plato? I must ask these very simple questions in order to see that we get some content. Plato has a very famous word for true being.

Student: Ideas.

LS: Yes. So in other words, the table is not true being. What is true being is the idea of the table. All right, Plato called what is true "the idea." Now what is the Aristotelian

equivalent of the ideas? Again, this is from the very superficial common textbook type history of philosophy: the "unmoved mover." But you must not forget that the "ideas" of Plato are also unmoving. So the highest, what *is* truly, is not moving, is simply unchanging. Now what Hegel says is that what truly is, is a moving mover. To be truly is in a way to become, to come into being. To say it very vulgarly, to be is to be a process. This is surely one crucial difference between Hegel and Plato and Aristotle.

But the second point is more immediately relevant as far as history is concerned. I have mentioned in the beginning of this seminar the crucial significance of Kant for Hegel. The characteristically Kantian thesis is the primacy of practical reason, of the reason governing actions. One could say that Kant replaces the thinking ego, the *ego cogitans* of Descartes, by the willing or acting subject. At any rate, what Hegel asserts is that the highest theme of theoretical philosophy is the field of human actions or production: history. So the primacy of practical reason is integrated by Hegel into his whole object. That is the second most striking difference between Hegel and the classics.

This much as a reminder. Now we must turn to more specific points, and again I begin at the beginning. History is rational. This means one unique process whose stages are indicated by proper names: Greeks, Romans, Germans. The historical process is a species of which there is only one individual. Is this statement intelligible? Well, if you take the species most known to us, which consist of infinitely many individuals: cats dogs, mice, and human beings . . . But theoretically it is possible that there is a species of which there is only one individual. For example, in the Middle Ages, in the doctrine of the angels, of separate intelligences, it was assumed that each angel belonged to a different species and that each was the sole individual in that species. This is hard for us to understand because we hear no longer about the angels, in philosophy, with separate intelligences. But in the case of history . . .

In other words, this process is a universal, but such a universal that there exists only one individual. To see what this means, we only have to contrast it with the alternative. In classical antiquity, the equipment to such a philosophy of history would be a doctrine of eternal returns, cycles infinitely repeated. There was a human culture prior to a cataclysm; there is one now; and then there will be another cataclysm, and after that there will be another civilization, and this will go on infinitely. Hegel denies this: he says the process is only one, but while being individual, it is at the same time universal. You can also say that form and matter coincide in this process. The practical meaning I explained last time: history cannot be understood by means of abstract universals, as Hegel puts it, but only by concrete universals. Therefore there is greater kinship between philosophic history and original history than with reflecting history or scientific history, which sees universal laws. These universal laws do not contain any proper names. I explained this last time: you study individual phenomena and reach abstract laws in which no individual names are contained. The philosophic history deals with the individual cultures, the proper names, and yet understands them as universals.

History is rational because it is the history of reason. Reason supplies both the form and the matter; therefore this coincidence. But this seems to be a fantastic assertion. What

about chance? What about rugged natural conditions, like climate, terrain and so on? These have nothing to do with reason; they are just there, and they stamp the men living in these cultures. Hegel's answer in the most abstract form is this. These are no objections: everything is rational, everything is mind.

Now we must see what Hegel means by that and whether that is such an absurdity as it sounds. There is a book called *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* by Reichenbach,[xvi] which I read a short time ago, and which begins with a quotation from Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. And Reichenbach thinks this is simple nonsense. Whether that is so, we will have occasion to examine. Now if you turn to page 19 in your edition, and in the German on page 63.

Student: "The destiny of the spiritual world . . . has no truth as against the spiritual world."[xvii]

LS: That is all we need. So that is the mere assertion: the physical world is subordinated to the world of the mind; or in the language of speculation, it has no truth compared with the spiritual world. Now let us turn to page 17 in your edition, where Hegel gives some illustrations of these things which he developed in his *Logic*. The purpose of this passage is to give a kind of indication of what it means that "nature has no truth in it, compared with the mind."

Student: "The nature of spirit may be understood . . . it would have perished—"

LS: It will have perished as matter.

Student: "it strives after the realization of its idea . . . when my existence depends upon myself."[xviii]

LS: Let us stop here. Now here Hegel gives a provisional indication of what he means by the assertion that nature has no truth. Hegel reduces it to its simplest form: "Nature, in contradistinction to mind, is what it is as matter, characterized by the fact that it is divisible, it consists of parts . . . "[xix]

[xvi] Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (1951).
[xvii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 19.
[xviii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 17.
[xix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 17.

Session 3: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —this hypothesis is then treated by the man who copies from A as fact, and then it is taught. Well, in the very limited field of history where I have first-hand knowledge, I know that this is absolutely true. I can say that the history of classical political philosophy, and even beyond that, is a web of hypothesis. In one case a scholar found out that a view went back to the imagination of a young man in a PhD thesis, and it migrated from that apparently mediocre thesis into the handbooks and was accepted, until he looked at it more closely. And while this is practically very important, I believe it is in itself trivial. What Hegel means by "intelligent empirical treatment" is, in the second place, not to overlook the wood for the trees. That is a bit more difficult: the distinction between the important and the unimportant.

What is the distinction between the important and the unimportant? We hear today that it is entirely relative. Didn't someone write a book called *Everyman His Own Historian*?[ii] And did he not mean that every man has his own opinions of what is important and unimportant? Now Hegel would of course deny that this is possible. He would say that the important is that in which a reasonable man is interested, and the unimportant is that in which a reasonable man is not interested. For example, to take some simple cases, how many cigars Churchill smokes a day is not an important question. In other words, we have a commonsense understanding, if we are not particularly stupid, as to what is not important and what is important. But then another step, since this is not sufficient because there is still a variety of opinions as to what is important even if we disregard such ridiculous questions as were mentioned. Hegel makes then this decisive step: What is important and unimportant can in no way depend on the subjectivity of the historian; it must be objective. But what is objectively important? Hegel answers: What is important for the historical unit. And that unit is a nation.

And now, again, we cannot start from such things as whether economics or law or literature more important. We have an objective criterion. That is most important for a nation to which the nation as nation bows. A nation as nation does not bow to economics, except in a state of complete degradation. It bows primarily, if it is not in a state of anarchy and if we go back to ancient times, to its gods. And therefore we have to understand its religion above everything else. But every nation bows also to its government, if it is not in a state of anarchy; and "government" means not simply this particular administration now but the governing principle. In America that is perfectly clear: the Constitution as distinguished from the present administration. And for Hegel the religion and the principle of government are inseparable. They needn't be identical. Let us call religion and the principle of government "ideas." Yes? And therefore Hegel says that empirical procedure consists in finding out which ideas have been governing a given nation, and that this can be empirically established. And then we have the sequence of this variety of ideas, and by understanding that variety we see there is an intelligible

[i] The commentary in this session appears in the second half of session 11 in the original typescript. As in the previous session, it deals with material from the introduction of *The Philosophy of History* and therefore belongs earlier in the course.
[ii] Carl Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics* (1935).

order connecting the set of ideas number 1 with the set of ideas number 2, and so on. And that is then the process. If one proceeds in this way, the reasonableness of the process will become clear, without any interference, wisecracks, fireworks, or whatever from the historians. It will emerge from the subject matter without any ado from the historian, except that he must have an open mind and a mind willing to see and to listen.

So Hegel's history claims to be objective in the most emphatic sense, and that is a very remarkable combination of objectivity and subjectivity. He treats the subjectivities objectively. He treats objectively the various historical subjectivities, i.e., the nations. This much about the meaning of Hegel's philosophical treatment of history. Hegel claims to prove this, and we have to be very severe but not biased critics of Hegel. But Hegel wanted to make this somewhat easier for young people. He addressed students, and therefore he appeals, in the old way of philosophers, to two *endoxa*, as the Greeks say: to two opinions in vogue, generally accepted. He argues from granted premises without going into the question of whether these premises are sound or unsound. That is a very simple thing. To use an example from my present lecture course,[iii] I started from the presumption that it is wise to study classical political philosophy. It may be a wholly wrong assumption, but it has the great advantage for practical purposes that it is generally admitted, and therefore I don't have to begin with a long argument. I can go right into the subject matter. That is the common practice implied in every teaching, of course. But Hegel appeals to two *endoxa*. Now let us look up on page 11, second paragraph.

Student: "I will only mention two phases or points of view . . . which will have to be enlarged on in the sequel."

LS: Now what are these things in the air which prepare, psychologically, Hegel's enterprise? Number one?

Student: "One of these points is that passage in history . . . really distinguish these from each other."[iv]

LS: In other words, what Hegel means is that Anaxagoras didn't mean more than that the world is ruled by laws, by universal laws, by an objective reason. Anaxagoras did not mean that a god as a subjective reason was guiding the world. That is the first point which he mentions, yes? And now what is the second thing to which Hegel refers? I don't believe it is in the English; in the German it is slightly different. I will read it to you from the German: "I have mentioned this first appearance of the thought that reason rules the world, and also its defects, because this principle got its perfect application in another form in which it is well known to us and in which we are persuaded of it."[v] In other words, what he does by implication is to disregard the Old Testament, and therefore the other principle to which he appeals after the Greek one is the Christian one. And now what does he say about that? Will you read that please?

[iii] Strauss also taught "Principles of Classical Political Philosophy" in autumn 1958.
[iv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 11.
[v] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 38.

Student: "We have next to notice the rise of this idea . . . to attach authority to presuppositions."[vi]

LS: In other words, Hegel reminds them of what they believe as Christians, namely, that Providence rules the world. But he also makes it clear that this is, in a way, only a help to the understanding. They are familiar with this thought from their childhood. But he does not make the presupposition that this belief is true, because that would be incompatible with the idea of philosophy as a presuppositionless enterprise. So after he has made clear the status of the religious belief in Providence, Hegel has to take issue with the common notion that Providence rules the world. But the common notion didn't give rise to a philosophy of history. Why not? Hegel has to face this problem. Everyone believed in Providence, but no one believed in the philosophy of history. What was the difficulty? Hegel develops that in the immediate sequel. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, Providence is the ways of God, and the ways of God are not the ways of men. And men cannot know the ways of God; they can know in general that the ways of God are just, i.e., they can believe that but they cannot strictly speaking *know* it, because they cannot know it *in concreto*. The general awareness of the justice and reasonableness of God's Providence is only faith, not knowledge. Hegel develops this at some length in the sequel. Man cannot *know* God, he can only *believe* in Him. That is said by the religious tradition, and it is said philosophically by Kant and other men: There cannot be knowledge of God. And Hegel says they contradict the Scriptures because the Scriptures demand of men that they should know God. That is an old medieval device of philosophers.

But then he goes a bit deeper and says that it is not presumptuous on the part of men to try to know God. And then he quotes Aristotle, who says: "God is not envious." The old story: God is not envious, and therefore God does not forbid us to try to understand him perfectly. Then he goes on to say, again appealing to a common view: "God communicates Himself to the heart, and not to the reason." But Hegel says: "What is meant by heart? You mean feeling or sentiment!" This is not in the English translation.[vii] If someone says, "I feel that way," then he has drawn a circle around himself. Everyone else has the same right to say, "I feel differently," and then you deny any common basis. In very particular points, feeling is perfectly in order. In other words, if I say that I love a particular woman, there is no higher criterion than that, if it does not contradict with law. But to assert regarding a content that all men must also have this in their feelings contradicts the very standpoint of feeling, namely, feeling as an essentially subjective and particular matter. If someone says he has religion in his feeling, and another says he has no God in his feeling, both are right. On this basis, universality, objectivity is utterly impossible.

[vi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 12-13.

[vii] Strauss draws here and in the following from Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 43-44.

Then he goes on to argue on the special Christian premise that in the Christian religion God has manifested himself. And Hegel says that means that in Christianity, God is no longer a mystery or a secret. This is of course a highly unorthodox interpretation of Christianity because the mystery of God was recognized by all others, and I suppose no one knew that better than Hegel himself. But that is a kind of defense of Hegel's enterprise against the most powerful opponents he could find: the Christian orthodoxy; in his case, Lutheranism. In this context there occur a few remarks which are of a much greater importance than Hegel's polemical devices.

So Hegel appeals to a belief that Providence has a plan in world history, and everyone admits that. And Hegel says that whoever admits this, if he can think straight, must admit that this plan can be known by man. That is an argument *ad hominem*, it is called, an argument addressed to a particular type of man—in this case, to the believers in the Bible. They say God is reasonable and has a plan in history, and if you put two and two together, you are driven to the conclusion that this plan is knowable. And therefore what he does is perfectly defensible on those grounds. Whether this is defensible simply can only be shown on the basis of his work, i.e., philosophically.

But after he has said these things, he goes on as follows: What, then, is the plan of Providence in world history? Has time come to it? In other words, while it was universally believed that history follows a plan of Providence since the beginning of Christianity, that did not mean that the plan could be known from the very beginning but only that in Christianity there was the promise that such a time will come. And Hegel raises the question of whether this time has come and says that "the distinguished and excellent character of the Christian religion is that with Christianity this time has come, that this constitutes the absolute epoch in world history."[viii] That is crucial. In one respect he merely repeats what all Christians have been saying throughout the ages: that Christianity is the absolute, the perfect final religion. But Hegel says that while this is true, still Christianity is religion, that is to say faith, and the question is now the fulfillment of Christianity which would be the knowledge of what was originally only believed. That would be the absolute moment in the absolute epoch, and Hegel claims that in fact this moment has now come, he thinks, on the absolute peak of history.

I would like to make this graphically clear, so that there is no doubt. There is a movement by which . . . but there is a point where there is no longer any progress of thought possible. Little things may be straightened out, you know, and untidy corners may be taken care of by good maids, but in the important things, as far as the principles are concerned, the ending can only be at this place. That is Hegel's claim. Hegel claims to stand on the peak, but in such a way . . . The objections to such a thesis are very obvious, they are presumptuous to the highest degree, but the question is whether they are so easy to avoid.

Let me put it this way. Let us reflect for a moment on our positivistic brethren. What do they say? They say, of course, that there is infinite progress, in principle. Science goes on; we have now the difficulty of the theory of quanta and relativity. Yes? And a hundred

[viii] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 45.

years from now, science will have solved this problem completely, and there will be an entirely unforeseeable form of problem and so on. You know of that, yes? Infinite progress, infinite surprises in the future. That is it! Our highest goals are subject to radical revision, and no one can say what will happen a century after us or even thirty years after us. This is not in details—Tito[ix] will go on as more capitalist or more communist, these things are granted by everyone—but as far as principle is concerned. Is this not diametrically opposed to Hegel's contention of the "absolute moment"? Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: In other words, this is the only thing which is important, because who cares for the theory of quanta or this other theory which is prevalent at this given time? I mean that it is of some interest, surely, but if this is changed nothing fundamental will happen. But the crucial point, the scientific method, the principle of the scientific method, this cooperation of mathematics with experiment, this is absolutely established; and if this should ever be changed, any positivist would tell you that this would be decay. He does not exclude that. They might come back with some fantastic medieval substantial formula, but they would say that was a decay. It seems to be implied in every position that what a man regards as really important, he regards as not subject to change, as final.

I give you another example. When Dewey wrote his book *Human Nature and Conduct*,[x] which is progressivism with a capital P, he gives a formula of virtue which consists of a certain relation of habit and impulse, which must cooperate in such a way that maximum satisfaction is possible in the cooperation and the relief coming from that. This is developed at some greater length, but this much—this formula, the only thing with which he is concerned—is meant of course to be final. In other words, if there would be a society in which there would only be habits, it would be extremely reactionary in character. And if there would only be impulse, there would be an anarchy which would be unbearable even for Dewey. And so here is the decisive point: the formula for virtue. So in other words, the question is only . . . Well, you could say that these are very general formulas, and Hegel is much more specific. This may make a difference. We must go into that later.

But this leads to another point which I would like to mention before we conclude. The trouble is that this is also omitted in the English. The world history shows how the mind gradually comes to a consciousness and to a willing of the truth. The truth dawns on man; he discovers the main point, and at the end he comes to perfect consciousness. The human mind necessarily arrives at full consciousness, and this has now happened in Hegel. Now what is the difficulty occurring in Hegel himself? We are not now speaking of the difficulties which might arise from the outside. Hegel gives the schema of what happens in every stage. First you have a community, what he calls a nation, which then posits, outside of itself, its world. For example, the Greek pantheon, the Greek notions of justice, and the general character of their notions of law and government, are the world which the Greek mind has posited. And then, when it has completely objectivated itself,

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[ix] Josip Broz Tito was president of Yugoslavia from 1953 to 1980.

[x] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1922).

it has reached its peak. Then what happens afterward? Up to the peak inclusive, it lives fully within the world. In more specific terms, the Greeks believed in the gods, and these gods are objectivations of the Greek mind; but they were not known to be objectivations of the Greek mind. They are thought to be living and thinking beings with proper names. Then, after this objectivation has been completed—after the tragedians, for instance, have given the most perfect objectivation of the Greek mind—after this, then thinking proper begins. The Greek mind becomes aware of its gods being the Greek mind, objectivation[s] of the Greek mind. But what does this mean for the Greeks? This happens of course only in some special individuals[1] [who] are loosely called sophists, or philosophers. But what does this mean? At this stage the sciences begin, sciences at all levels, including philosophy. Hence the sciences and the corruption and decline of a nation always go together. In this moment philosophy begins; in the moment the nation becomes aware of its not being subject to its gods but the creator of its gods, the corruption begins. Corruption, of course, has not the meaning in which we see corruption in certain parts of the municipal government of Chicago, but it means, really, the loss of orientation, the complete loss, the decline of a nation. Always.

Those of you who have read Rousseau's *Discourses* will see that Hegel agrees with Rousseau at this point. Rousseau has written a whole discourse on this subject of how science and corruption are inseparable from each other.[xi] Now in that, of course, we must make an application to Hegel, naturally, because Hegel has said in a well-known passage of his *Philosophy of Right* that he has applied the same principle to his times. "The Owl of Minerva"—that is, wisdom—"begins flight in the dusk."[xii] That is to say, when night approaches, when the society declines and there are no longer any great tasks, then wisdom begins. Spengler's *Decline of the West* lets the cat out of the bag, because as Spengler sees it, it means the decline of the West. Of course, as Spengler sees it, that means the decline of mankind, because the Western civilization is the last civilization, as you know. That is the end of any meaningful human life. It is one of the greatest difficulties of Hegel that one does not really know whether Hegel was fully aware of what he clearly implied: that with the fulfillment, with the completion of world history, there is now the beginning of a final decay, a final corruption of mankind. This is a problem which we shall later raise in the form of the "last man," where people no longer have any tasks, and where all great social tasks have been solved, and where we have the perfect society. After all really important intellectual tasks have been solved, and when the truth is known in the final system, what will happen then? Triviality? There can be no genuine heroism anymore, and whether and to what extent Hegel saw that is, as far as I can see, impossible to decide.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: But Marx, as far as I know, never had this difficulty which Hegel has in virtue of his agreement with Rousseau's *First Discourse*. What Marx took over from Rousseau included the complete disregarding of all complications, yes? Rousseau's doctrine is very complex; it is much more sophisticated than people are inclined to think. The German

[xi] Strauss here refers to Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*.
[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Preface, 23.

Idealists, Kant and Hegel especially, try to give a harmonistic solution, whereas Rousseau felt unable to give one, and he knew it. And yet, certainly Hegel—not Kant—accepted this crucial thesis of the *First Discourse*, where there is a fundamental disharmony between the peak of society and the peak of knowledge. I mean, Rousseau used very simple images like Sparta: the perfect *polis*; or early Rome: no philosophy, no art; Athens: the incarnation of art and intelligence, but corrupt. Yes? I mean, one can easily question these, but that doesn't dispose of the fundamental point, the fundamental problem. And Hegel accepts this.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but I think one cannot mention Marx and Hegel in the same breath as far as these questions go, because Marx is infinitely less philosophic than Hegel was. And the point which Marx made against Hegel is that according to Hegel there had been history up to now and there will be no history in the future. Yes? And Marx said there will be history in the future, and he had certain points against Hegel which on the secondary level support this. And what will happen according to Marx? Everything which happened up to now, including the communist revolution, is only prehistory; the real history begins when men make the jump from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom. So in other words, what Marx implies is that there will be history in the realm of freedom, the communist society. But what does history mean here? If it means anything, it means wholly unforeseeable changes, complete surprises, yes? And that is of course one reason why communists are so extremely reticent to say what the final communist society looks like, because they expect from us that we should go with them on the basis of the mere assurance that it will be wonderful, but they can't say anything specific about it. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, sure, that is what he said. You don't need heroic virtue anymore, because there are officials who will do their duty. That is all. So there is no longer a need for a Caesar or a Napoleon, because some general will be appointed by the legitimate government, and he will be intelligently selected and will do his duty. Or maybe he will be defeated, but in both ways it is unheroic.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, I think that can't be done away with because Hegel speaks with genuine admiration for this kind of virtue of the historic individuals. We will come across that passage. In Hegel's sense, I think we can say there will no longer be historic individuals. There will be more or less good administrators, but no longer any historic individuals, I repeat this sentence: "Science and the corruption of a people are always inseparable from each other." You could of course say that he speaks here only of a nation, and that this does not mean the whole human race.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but still the question is whether, in the absence of great individuals,[xiii] what Hegel understands by corrupting can be prevented. That is the question. I mean, I don't think that question, which is absolutely crucial for Hegel and for any other reasonable criticism of Hegel, can be settled on the basis of this passage, but I wanted to mention that this is really the great problem of Hegel: What is the end of history, and what does this mean? Is it possible to live on that basis? One could say that this was the beginning of Nietzsche's criticism of Hegel.

One more point which I will read to you. "The individual essentially belongs to its time."[xiv] That is a statement which Hegel repeats in all his works. No individual can transcend that substance of the nation. It can be more brilliant and intelligent than many others, but it cannot surpass the nation[']s] mind. The ingenious intelligence can only know, can only understand the mind of the nation and can take its bearings by it. The mind is radically historical. That is of course also an essential part of his teachings.

Now, without further ado, I must adjourn the class.

[1] Deleted "which"

[xiii] In original: "[individuals?]"

[xiv] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Preface, 21; see also Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 95.

Session 4: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —I mean, you went for the whole, you were after the whole.[ii]

Student: I guess I was trying to climb Mount Everest again.

LS: No, not quite. In the first part of your paper you limited yourself to the concrete political proposals of Hegel which are fairly easy to understand. And you did not go into the metaphysics too well, which is perfectly defensible. And it is of course perfectly all right that you state your criticism of Hegel. But I must first see whether I understand you.

Now to begin at the end, you said Hegel cannot know the future. That is clear, and would be admitted by him. But the question is whether this ignorance of the future is philosophically relevant—which he denies. Now you say that future states may be freer than Hegel's state.

Student: Or may be as free as . . .

LS: Yes, that is almost the same thing. And this is in spite of the end of world history, granting that. This I do not understand. I mean, if you would question that the end of history has come, then of course there is an open future, and then surprises are in store which may condemn to oblivion Hegel and many other things. But if there are no surprises in store, there can be no interesting things in the future.

Student: The way I interpreted this idea of surprise or novelty is that it pertains only to whether or not there can be more freedom. Well, once freedom has been established, then of course there is nothing new in regard to freedom. Freedom is freedom. But can't freedom exist in any other form but a constitutional monarchy? If the end of history is freedom and not constitutional monarchy, then history has not any exalted status.

LS: But Hegel's specific definition of freedom includes constitutional monarchy.

Student: But on the other hand, he says that constitutional monarchy is the form of reality within which freedom appears. They are not identical.

LS: Yes, they are surely not identical, but inseparable. And therefore the only way of showing the beauties of the future would be to show the defective character of Hegel's argument; for example, that it must be a monarchy. That one can very well question. We will come to that later. And then we have at least the possibility of a future democracy, of freedom in a democracy. Of course the democracy would have to be of a particular kind: constitutional, and all these other things.

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as session 3.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Now let me come to the more central points which you raised. Freedom is the end, and the state is the actuality of freedom. And you argue quite well that if freedom is not the end, the fact that the state is the actuality of freedom does not prove that man's political end is man's moral end. If we simply make a distinction between freedom and happiness, the state may produce freedom but not yet happiness. Freedom would then be the political end but not the moral end. That is perfectly strict and correct. Let's see how far this meets Hegel's point. You raised the question of whether this form is meant for freedom or freedom for man. I think that stated in this generality, one would have to say that this question is not really a good question for Hegel.

Student: I know it. I deliberately used it . . .

LS: But if one wants to answer the question as stated, one would have to say that man is for the sake of freedom, meaning that freedom is that by virtue of which man is fully man. But freedom does not mean something which transcends man or is beyond man; freedom is the highest form in which man exists, and therefore man is for that. "Man" means in this case mere matter for education. The "mere matter" in this case is not for its own sake, but for the end of education. Yes?

Student: I wanted to ask a question here, please. Once historical men have created freedom, once the constitutional monarchy is here, then man is really no longer a means?

LS: No. The free man is the end, the end for which everything exists. Now let us see some other points which we can take up. You see, all the criticisms which you made are based on a somewhat too narrow conception of freedom. Let us disregard for one moment the distinction between freedom and happiness. Hegel himself speaks of happiness, I know that, but let us speak only of freedom. What are the concrete phenomena of which you could think which are higher than full membership in a just society, full and active membership in a just society? That this is good, you would admit; and that it could be called "freedom" makes sense, yes? I mean, if everyone has his full participation in a just civil society, that is freedom for everyone. What other things could you think of which are really worthwhile and which are not freedom?

Student: If you mean by freedom everything which goes on in the state, then I would grant that freedom is the end.

LS: But give an example. I mean, if political freedom in the fullest sense that one can imagine is one thing, then one can rightly say there are other valuable things which are not covered by it. Now, what are they?

Student: Oh, let's say aesthetic appreciation.

LS: All right, but let us say art. What is art according to Hegel?

Student: Well, his definition of art is that it makes sensualists.

LS: Yes, but a more formal one? It is one form, higher than politics, of freedom. When Hegel says, or almost says, that man's perfection is freedom, he means much more than political freedom. That Hegel speaks in terms of the highest praise of the state in the *Philosophy of Right* is true, and there are these passages which would make one believe that according to Hegel the state and political activity is simply the highest form of freedom. But this is not Hegel's view. This is, after all, only a part of his doctrine in the *Philosophy of Right*, but one has to take the whole as he presented it in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophic Sciences*. That is a most comprehensive and extremely aphoristic statement.

Now Hegel always makes the distinction between [the following]: the subjective mind, which is very low, what belongs to psychology in the narrower sense; the objective mind, which is the sphere of morality and politics; and beyond these and above them, the absolute mind, which is religion, art, and philosophy. And they are the highest forms of freedom, especially philosophy. And it is only due to the fact that this is a special part of the work that this can escape us. Of course one would have to raise the question of whether it is right to call all the other activities of men which are rationally defensible "forms" of freedom. But still, one could say [that] if this is wrong, then it is not only Hegel's own fault. When, for example, Spinoza speaks in his *Ethics* of freedom and speaks of the "free man" and identifies him with the philosopher, and when Aristotle says practically the same in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, "The science by virtue of which man is truly free is philosophy," that is the same thing. I mean, even if you go down to other activities—what about food and drink, or shelter . . . and clothing in addition? That is the sphere, in a way, of necessity: our needs, our wants. There is no freedom. But even here freedom comes in: to use a very common term, "freedom of enterprise," the manner in which men acquire what they need . . . yes? . . . it can be regimented and it can be free. In the Hegelian scheme it *must* be free. Take Adam Smith . . . yes? So freedom is an all-pervasive phenomenon which occurs on a variety of levels, and one can perhaps say that from Hegel's point of view freedom of enterprise would be the lowest form because it is so immediately linked up with sheer necessity, i.e., dependence of men on things, whereas in the higher forms the mind is to an ever increasingly higher degree free, and recognizes itself as free.

Now let us perhaps follow this argument from the other way around. Let us really bust this argument wide open and say: What do we care about Hegel's definition of freedom when for all we know it may be entirely arbitrary? Let us take the broadest and loosest definition of freedom. After all, our commonsensical notions today would of course rebel against Hegel's view that this would be a free state in which you have one House of Lords which has as much to say[1] [as] the House of Commons, which practically consists in a kind of corporate state with a prevalence of public officials in it; and the individual vote doesn't exist, or at least has not the slightest practical importance, and even these estates have only the very limited function of granting revenues and presenting grievances and a bit of contribution to the legislation. We would not say this is a free state as we mean today. That we can all do, but what do we understand by freedom if we take it in the loosest, but in a way the most intelligible sense, the most commonly intelligible sense? What is freedom?

Student: My commonsense notion is simply that it is a condition whereby means may be utilized to achieve some end. Opportunity . . . rational opportunity.

LS: Yes, but that is already very sophisticated.

Student: Is it?

LS: Yes . . . relatively speaking . . . I was thinking of the loosest thing which can easily be refuted, but which one must consider. "Freedom is to do what one likes"—you know, a man is free if he can do whatever he wants. Now of course one cannot say he is not free if he is prevented from doing so by paralysis, because this is not human fault; one can rightly say this is not politically relevant. But if he is not prevented by other human beings from doing what he lists, he is free. Now this of course is absolutely impossible, because it would mean chaos, anarchy, and absolute war of everybody against everybody. The maxim, you can say, is "the maximal freedom for everyone to do what he likes"; and the "maximal freedom" would mean on this level a freedom to do what one likes, limited only by an equal freedom for everyone else to have the same freedom—and this means freedom under law. That is, you can say, a very simple and commonsensical and, as far as it goes, a defensible thing.

Now how does this work more concretely? "What men like" [. . .] If you take for example: someone likes to murder. That is disposed of by the general maxim because he deprives another man of his freedom by murder. But there could be other things which do not have this harsh character of murder, homicide, kidnapping, and chaining other human beings; for example, the freedom to stand on one's head and to walk naked through the streets, which doesn't do any harm to anyone else, but on the other hand, if someone would insist on that—[iii]

—is something which essentially points beyond itself. Matter tends to be non-matter and can never achieve it. By pointing to non-matter, matter admits its inferiority to mind. Mind has its center within itself; mind is in itself and with itself, and is therefore free. Mind has its center within itself and at the same time strives for its center, which means that full freedom is not given; it is only potentially that. The mind is truly free only when it knows its freedom. The mind is in fact free at all times, but as long as it does not know its freedom it is not truly free. It must be free not only *in* itself but *for* itself—it must be aware of it.

Now let us see some other . . . On page 19 of your translation; page 63 bottom in the German.

Student: "Attention was also directed . . . in the concrete."[iv]

[iii] The tape was changed at this point.
[iv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 19.

LS: In the German, that is more literally translated: "[Between] the principle as it is in itself—*an sich*—and what is actual or real." Now I must try to explain this. The term *an sich* points back immediately to Kant, who made a distinction between the thing-in-itself and the phenomena. We can understand Hegel's point here to some extent by starting from the Kantian distinction. I will do it graphically. [LS writes on the blackboard] Now if we take the Kantian formula, the thing-in-itself here, and over here is the phenomenal world. Now from Kant's point of view the phenomenal world is the lower world—I mean the world of which we have knowledge, but that is not really the essential variety. Hegel says that this *an sich* is related to the phenomenal as the potential is to the actual. "Actual" means the same as "real" in the present usage; the word "real" is a very late creation. So the thing-in-itself is not knowable for the reason that it is only potential—you know, a man is unknowable, really, when he is a baby. You don't know how he will develop, but if he has become mature and fully developed, then you can know him. And [a] man—and the same applies to a nation—is only, as Hegel puts it, a series of his deeds. Mere potentialities, mere gifts, mere inclinations don't tell you anything about aptitudes—that doesn't tell you anything about the man, what he will do with them. And the true man, the real man—and the same applies to nations—is the actualization.

So Hegel turns the Kantian distinction upside down: the phenomenal, what Kant calls the phenomenal, is the truly actual, and the thing-in-itself is only the unintelligible potency and as such an unacceptable potency. And that means something else. When Hegel says that man is free *an sich*, in himself, and truly free only when his freedom has become conscious freedom, when he has[2] [actualized] that freedom, therefore Hegel can also say the difference is that between freedom in itself—in itself means here undeveloped—and that "posited" freedom. I posit my freedom by actualizing it. I mention these points because they will be necessary for the understanding of the sequel.

There are some other remarks which I would like to consider here. Now let us come back to that apparently monstrous assertion that "everything which is, is mind." I read to you another passage which is not in the translation: "The end or goal of history is that the mind should come to consciousness of itself, or that is should make the world to agree with the mind, for these two statements are identical."[v] One can say that the mind appropriates to itself the objective world, or inversely, that the mind produces its concept out of itself and objectivates it and thus becomes its own being. Now I will try to explain that. Once one has understood this sentence, one sees that what Hegel says is not so fantastic. Now if you start from the strictly speculative thesis that you have a substance which is unmoved and undeveloped, and this substance produces out of itself by its own inner necessity the whole world of nature as well as the world of the mind—let us say the whole historical process—this is the hardest to understand, and I think the enormous difficulty of Hegel's *Logic* shows that. But you can also start from another point of view, the most commonsensical view which is man. Man lives in a world which is absolutely not the work of the mind; it is mindless, brutal, and unintelligible, and he is thrown into that world and has to live in it. That we understand immediately. Well, what happens then? . . . Well, I suppose that men try to preserve themselves. How do they do that? . . . Well, first they pick berries and similar things, and sleep in caves; then some

[v] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 74.

fellow has a bright idea and says: We can sow and then we will be sure of finding grain in the autumn, or: We can build a hut imitating a cave so that if all caves are taken or if no caves are around we will have a house. That means we transform the given. Man with a view to simple ends knows what he is doing. The bee does not know what it is doing, but man knows.

Now this process can and does take place on a much broader scale, and the name for it is *science*. What does science mean? To understand the world as given. When we understand the world as given, we reveal the understandability of the world, the intelligibility of the world as given. So Hegel says that although this is not a presentation of the problem on the highest level, the problem can be understood on the level which everyone grants immediately. The fact of man's so-called conquest of nature—literally and in the somewhat metaphorical sense—[and the] scientific understanding of nature both show the intelligibility of the world in which men live. Hegel would just turn this around—the "How would this be possible?"—and say: Must there not be something in nature that lends itself to the understanding? And then Hegel would say that we should think about nature, and then we should think about matter—you remember the former statement—and then we will understand this aptitude. Nature in itself cannot have resistance against the mind. That is known not only empirically by constantly increasing control of nature but can be understood by understanding matter in its specific character as divisible and characterized by gravity.

Now let us first follow Hegel's argument as he divided it. Yes?

Student: Is it not true that all we can do is understand nature, that understanding nature and conquering nature are coequal and that we cannot go beyond?

LS: That would be highly undesirable, Hegel would say, because if we would go beyond it and swallow up nature, as it were, we could no longer live. Yes? You see, if the mind's process of the conquest of nature would consist in making nature disappear—for example, transforming everything into mind, into thinking human beings—then what should we eat? We would have to become cannibals and eat each other. So the "conquest of nature" can only mean the controlling, or taming, or whatever you call it, but not the destroying of it. Your difficulty is not quite clear to me. One point I think I understood: that the conquest of nature for Hegel in the literal sense—technology, let us say—is of course only in the service of the true function of man. Yes? That is clear, but you had some other difficulties in your question and I would like to disentangle them.

Student: I did not mean the disappearance of nature, but if in the conquest of nature it became completely intelligible, it does not limit man in any way; it is completely in our power and at our disposal, but it has not disappeared.

LS: What does that mean in concrete terms?

Student: That it has no secrets from us.

LS: Yes . . . that state has not been reached, you mean.

Student: Yes. But then we have two views: we conquer by making it comprehensible, we take all the secrets out of nature; and then do we not start something new really? . . . after all these natural mutations are limited? Is not the whole historical process limited to the struggle with nature until it is completely comprehensible?

LS: If I understand you correctly, you oppose to Hegel a Marxist conception?

Student: Yes.

LS: Sure. What Marx says can be understood this way: that jump from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom takes place after the completion of the conquest of nature. Then nature no longer has any secrets of any interest, and man can do what he wants with nature; and therefore infinite leisure and all this kind of thing. And since there is no longer a dependence of man on nature, there need no longer be a dependence of man on man, i.e., of governed on governor. Is that not the point?

Student: Yes.

LS: Yes, but Hegel rejects this view. But one should question why Hegel, prior to Marx and unaware of Marx, implicitly rejects Marx. Why did not Hegel believe in the rationality of such an enterprise? You must not forget that the Marxist view is linked inseparably with the abolition of labor; in the realm of freedom there is no labor. You know there is a famous passage in the *German Ideology* where he says that the culture of man, the freedom, consists in the full development of man's faculties, i.e., of all faculties of all men.[vi] Now today we have some different faculties—someone is musically gifted, another is gifted for mechanical work—and there is a peculiar distribution of these faculties, and this is underlying the distribution of labor and, in a way, the class division. I mean, take the extreme case. A man who is completely dumb but has a strong back is not likely to become president of the United States, yes? And the other way around. A man who is physically weak but has other gifts could become a conductor of an orchestra. In other words, the factual inequality of gifts is of course the basis of any inequality, whatever equality and its merits may be. Hegel has no objection to inequality; he takes it for granted that there would be a hierarchically ordered society. I am not now concerned with the legal side, only the factual side. It would be a hierarchy. The Marxist doctrine is inseparable from a radical egalitarianism. For this reason, the conquest of nature must be infinitely stronger in Marx than it is in Hegel. Hegel takes the natural inequality as desirable and inevitable. Do you see that if you are one hundred percent egalitarian you need much more conquest of nature? Think of the issue of . . . it was a beautiful illustration of this issue. Men are now in fact unequal whatever the legal situation is, and

[vi] Strauss is probably referring to the famous passage where Marx says that in communist society no one will have "an exclusive area of activity and each can train himself in any branch he wishes . . . making it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon . . ." (*The German Ideology*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence Simon [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994], 119).

that has something to do with their genes; so if you want to abolish inequality—and that is something which cannot be done in one generation—then Lysenko[vii] must be right. I mean, there must be a transmitted heritage of gifts and non-gifts which must be affected by social and human action. And what Hegel found unjust and unreasonable was that there should be a law by which a human being could be compelled to follow the profession of his parents—in other words, a caste system—that is unreasonable; but a broad convergence of what one would call the social hierarchy and the natural hierarchy, that Hegel found as reasonable as Plato and Aristotle did. Yes? I don't see what is your difficulty.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but Hegel . . . What does it mean, "Hegel stops the process"? We have to take up this question more than once, but let us leave it at the point which you are now raising. Up to the point which we had reached hitherto, we cannot exclude the following possibility: that maybe men get completely crazy ideas, and these completely crazy ideas take hold of large bodies of men and then they might embark on such a Marxist enterprise. Yes? But Hegel would say that this is not a part of history, that Marxist history is not true history but a kind of post-history. In other words, after the whole thing has been achieved and men no longer have any real tasks, out of boredom they invent fancy tasks: the fancy task being to establish full equality; and that means that every man will be a painter. Garbage collecting? No, that is being taken care of by pushbutton in this stage already. Every man will be a painter, a philosopher, a gardener, and so on. Hegel would say that is abominable; jacks of all trades, that is abominable, that is the decay of man. As long as men are really something, they have a sensible one-sidedness. The notion of the universal man is a pipe dream. There are some very rare human beings who are universal geniuses, men like Leibniz, Goethe, and Plato, of course, but generally speaking this is very rare. Men are by nature unequal and qualitatively different, and this is all to the good. The point which you imply, and the point which I do not believe we are in a position to discuss as yet, is whether Hegel has a right to say that. That is probably your point?

Student: Yes. It seems to me that history is not yet complete since it is not yet that "other world." There is some other world . . . It sounds strange, but . . .

LS: Sure, that is clear, the world of art and of philosophy, to say nothing of religion. We come to that later. This is for Hegel absolutely superior to the social world, the world of the state in the narrower sense. There is no question about that. But the question now is whether it is necessary that the rights of man should be recognized, otherwise the state is not a rational state—equality before the law and all the crucial implications of that. That all men should have the same pursuits, say, painting and philosophy or whatever, there is no place whatever in Hegel for that.

[vii] Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976) was a Soviet agronomist and biologist who rejected Mendelian genetics in favor of a pseudoscientific theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

I think the fantastic character of Marxism appears really—if you take this seriously, as one must—in this notion of the universal man which is implied. The abolition of the division of labor means exactly this. In the present society and in all societies up to now, there was a division of labor. That means that every man was in a way a specialist; of course not in the extreme form which we have now, but it is clear, for example, that Pericles was not a shoemaker. Clearly not. I mean Pericles could make speeches and he could guide the policy of Athens, but he would be absolutely unable to make shoes, at least a proper pair of shoes. Marx regards this as an impoverishment, this specialization, but Hegel does not. Hegel regards it as a condition of civilization which must be preserved as long as there is a civilization. He would perhaps argue as follows. If you try to abolish it—if, for example, you argue that all people are musical, even me, and if I would make an effort I would come to understand quite a few things—the question arises as to whether the possible result is in any proportion to the effort required. Should not one rather put the effort into something for which one has a natural bias, a facility or something? Yes? There is a problem here. And if we go a step farther, we see that it cannot be made dependent on the individual at all, because some people are born without certain aptitudes, so it is a matter of eugenics. And if you want to have a very broad policy of eugenics, you find that is not possible given the fact of how people fall in love, yes? Without an enormous amount of compulsion—for example, forcing two people who are very gifted in one respect never to marry one another, as little as people in some countries who have venereal disease—the chances are that this gift will be perpetuated. Now look at what a terrific tyranny you have. Hegel would say that you have to consider whether a society in which such matters as choosing one's spouse is dependent on some expert is really a desirable and satisfactory human society, yes?

There is another fantastic assumption in Marx: that you can have these things after the abolishment of the state, i.e., of compulsion. I mean, it is undeniable to anyone who has been to work in a factory or been in the army that there are really people who enjoy doing a work which "intellectuals" generally do not like. Why should the so-called intellectuals be compelled to do work which is really of no use to them, and why should others be compelled to work hard on things which they are never likely to master and still less to enjoy? The question which we imply here we will have to take up in later sessions, as it is important. It is: How Hegel can argue this way? This was the classical argument, of course, but how can Hegel do that? I think that depends entirely on his assertion that a society of a hierarchical structure, a non-egalitarian society, is the rational society. A caste society is irrational and unjust, and only defensible in the past as the best possible then under certain conditions. But if nature, i.e., reason, has matured, then it is independent. Then inequality is not only defensible but positively necessary. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: That is what Hegel wants . . .

Student: [inaudible]

LS: But still, in concrete terms it means a question of what these people are to do who are in a final and complete state of technological unemployment. You know, when all the necessary work is done with practically no labor, what are they going to do with their lives? Shall they sit the whole day in front of television?

Student: Those who have no talent sit in front of the television, and the rest become philosophers.

LS: Yes, but the question is then whether one can be so inhuman as to think only of the bliss of philosophy and not think also of the terrible condition of those who have nothing but circuses, to use the old formula. That is a very grave question, a question which doesn't exist for Hegel for many reasons, one reason being that Hegel, in opposition to Marx, regarded the final society as essentially a religious society, and therefore the extreme secularism of Marx is absolutely out of the question. We come to that later. Yes?

Student: From Hegel's point of view, can anything obvious support the contention that nature will never revolt against the conquest of man, as against the contention that nature will partially yield to it?

LS: Yes. That is the point of which I was thinking, although from a slightly different point of view. From Hegel's point of view the natural inequalities of which we spoke are not so detestable as from a Marxist point of view, because for Hegel, in spite of the fact that it is lower than the mind, it is itself a part of this divine process. You must not forget that. And the conquest of nature is more than a mere forcing of the completely anti-mind into mind's mold: there is a tendency of nature toward the mind. That is the meaning of Hegel's philosophy of nature, of which we could mention here only a very little point in the analysis of matter. The Marxist doctrine is based on the rejection of Hegel's philosophy of nature; and if not Marx himself, then certainly Engels and more of our contemporary Marxists simply replace Hegel's philosophy of nature with a kind of modern natural science. But they have to freeze it at a certain point—you know that, the troubles with the theory of relativity and that sort of thing. The moment natural science reaches a point where it can no longer claim to be true in the sense that classical physics claimed to be true, in which it becomes frankly operational, in this moment it becomes unbearable for the communists. The moment it becomes operational in its own understanding, it is no longer strictly speaking atheistic. You only have to read Lenin, who was already confronted with that when he wrote his book called *Imperial Criticism*.[viii] That was prior to the world war in which Marxism faced for the first time present-day positivism. In one way Lenin was superior to them because he lacked this kind of escapism characteristic of positivism, but on the other hand he has to make assertions all the time about what science really is, and [he] has against him what actual scientists say about what their science is. They have to adopt the technological results of this most recent science, because otherwise no atomic bomb. But that is one of the great difficulties. They had to freeze the development at a certain point. Yes?

[viii] Strauss appears to refer to Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917).

Student: Engels was capable of foreseeing some kind of cosmic catastrophe. Could Hegel have taken anything like that into account?

LS: I cannot claim to have read every line of Hegel, but as far as I know Hegel never says a word about that. I looked up in the passage where one could expect it, but there was not a word about that. The point is this. Hegel discusses the question of evolution and the resultant sciences somewhere, and he says that evolution must be understood not as a real process of the genesis of one species out of others. It is strictly a logical relation. But of course he has to give some answer to the question of how mankind arose if it was not always; and of course he never says, as Aristotle did, that there were always human beings. This is one of the least satisfactory things in Hegel's doctrine, I believe. Engels predicts that, surely, but he also says that it is a long way off; and for practical purposes we have infinite progress in the future, and who cares about what will happen in billions of years? A very good statement for a propagandist, but not for a philosopher.

Student: Would that be such a problem for Hegel . . .

LS: Yes, but still it has very grave consequences because it is a unique process which began at a certain point in time and ends at a certain point in time. There[3] [are] the natural elements, or whatever you call it, that are always, so you have really an infinity of time—time before and time after—within which, in a comparatively short period of time, there is this process of human history. The question is: Of what necessity is there that this process should not be infinitely repeated?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, sure, *man*! I mean, if you take this state of affairs seriously, then there is no reason why there should not have been man and history infinitely in the past and infinitely in the future, and in the meantime destruction. That is a difficulty which Hegel never discusses.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: I believe it would be a very great theoretical difficulty for Hegel to discuss it, but let us see if we can come across a point which we can discuss with greater fruitfulness, because there is much more material.

Now Hegel then discusses the end of history first—the self-consciousness of the mind, the mind recognizing itself in everything. Then he says: What are the means by which history is achieved? If history is to be rational, the means must be rational too. How is this possible? There is a real paradox here. Let us look in the English translation on page 20, and in the German on page 79. Do you have that?

Student: "The means by which the freedom . . . law and morality."[ix]

[ix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 20.

LS: Yes. Now this is then the problem. The means by which the end is achieved is not virtue. Virtue plays a very insignificant role in history. The means are the passions, the irrational passions. In spite of this, and ultimately because of this, history is rational. A paradox. Hegel gives in the sequel a very impressive description of the "slaughter bench of history" as he calls it,[x] the very terrible and depressing spectacle; and what Hegel is driving at is that it is absolutely true: that is how history looks. But what the philosopher will do is to discern the reason, the beauty, in this most terrible spectacle. Hegel has once said that philosophy must guard against the desire to be edifying.[xi] What he meant was that philosophy is necessarily edifying, therefore one doesn't have to worry about it. If you just follow reason, cold reason, you cannot help arriving at a rational and therefore satisfactory picture of what is. The end is to be actualized, and it can only actualized by man. Prior to its actualization the end is merely potentiality, something merely internal in the mind; the actualization is due to man to man's will. That means it is due primarily to his needs and his passions. The end can never be truly actual, the mind cannot achieve its full actualization if this actualization does not become men's concern, men's interest . . . My concern, my interest—the concern of my subjective will, as Hegel calls it. This subjective will desires to be satisfied legitimately. The satisfaction of the subjective will—and to take it on its lowest level, the narrowest selfish desires without any regard whatever to this objective end—leads and can only lead to the actualization of the objective end. That is the point which Hegel develops in the section on means.

Does this remind you of something pre-Hegelian, something pre-Hegelian but present here? That no one thinks of the end, everyone thinks of his narrowest selfish interests which are not only compatible with the actualization of the great end but are the conditions of its actualization? In other words, if all men from the very beginning had consciously desired the actualization of the end, full self-consciousness of the mind would never have come about. The condition was this blindness. Does this remind you of something?

Student: Adam Smith.

LS: Sure, that is the model: the invisible hand, what Hegel calls the "ruse of reason," only there are naturally great differences.

Now, how does this proceed? We discussed this a bit last time, and I believe we can generally leave it at the point we made. How does it come that you have here a completely narrow selfish human individual at this point? There will always be many of them. How does this come about? Well, the first stage is law. However stupid a taboo it may be, law is already something better than the merely subjective will: it is already something universal. It speaks not only to one individual but to all, if only to all of a particular society. In the sequel there are some very remarkable and very eloquent passages about the ordinary understanding of history, meaning chiefly the moral understanding.

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[x] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 21.
[xi] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, par. 9.

Now I must explain this, because it is one great stumbling block to the understanding of Hegel. The historical process takes place in this way generally. Necessarily with human beings living together, there arises at first custom, but then law, i.e., universals. This law is in one sense universal and in another sense non-universal. It is universal qua law, and it is non-universal because it is addressed to this or that member of a particular community to the exclusion of others. It is therefore not simply universal. No law, no principle of justice which has ever appeared has been simply just. Let us take the Greek city: principles of great universality, but limited. Therefore, if you take the case of Socrates, Socrates was not a simple criminal. I mean, the criminal is the least interesting problem; he has nothing but the subjective will against the law. Say he wants to steal only because he believes he needs what he steals—that is nothing, it has no standing, he is a criminal. But Socrates was not a criminal, except in the sense that he did something forbidden by the law of Athens. But in another sense he did something which had a higher right, and a deeper understanding of justice induced him to commit an illegal act. History is therefore the conflict between different principles of right—between different universals—in which, as Hegel contends, the higher principle of right invariably wins. Winning doesn't mean that this individual will become—how do they say it?—[an] honorary citizen of the city, or [an] honorary doctor, or whatever; he will of course be killed, but his principle wins out. Take the examples that Hegel prefers, the great destroyer-founders: Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon. Alexander the Great died young, Caesar was murdered, and Napoleon was deported. You can have pity for these men, but that is uninteresting; the interesting thing is what Alexander achieved: the fusion of the Greek and the Oriental world. Caesar achieved the destruction of the rotten Roman Republic and the establishment of this Roman empire which was the harbinger of the future. Napoleon achieved the complete destruction of the ancient regime and at the same time the establishment of the new post-revolutionary state as distinguished from that Jacobin anarchy.

Now I read to you a formulation which is particularly instructive, in the English edition on page 32, paragraph 3, where he speaks of the world's historical individuals. Will you read that, please?

Student: "A world-historical individual . . . many an object in its path."[xii]

LS: That's it. Now let us translate Hegel's metaphor into non-metaphoric language. Many individuals, innocent human beings, will be killed and robbed and whatnot in this process, and this does not detract a bit from the rationality and the goodness of the process. I believe that is one of the major stumbling blocks to the acceptance of Hegel's philosophy [by] decent people. Hegel seems to justify these terrible crimes which were committed. Think of the things which Napoleon did which were terrible; and Hegel says that it cannot be helped, it is part of the rationality of the process. Now what is Hegel's answer? Let us read in another place, on page 33 at the beginning of the paragraph.

Student: "But though we might tolerate . . . inherently eternal and divine."[xiii]

[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 32.
[xiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 33.

LS: Now here Hegel suggests a more radical formulation of the difficulty. Morality consists according to Kant in never treating an individual as a means to an end. But when we look at history, we see that these world historical individuals treat human beings all the time as mere means, and therefore they are utterly immoral. Thus we are presented with the paradoxy that the rationality of the historical process exists not despite the immorality but by virtue of that immorality. A most shocking teaching. How does Hegel reply to that?

I will give only the main point. Let us take the truly moral individual, he would say . . . I mean, let us not be flighty in our thoughts, let us argue that out seriously. What is a moral man? A man who does his duty because it is his duty, and he does not want to be rewarded for doing his duty. Hegel hits it very strongly and speaks with contempt for those people who want to have an eternal reward, perhaps because they have not massacred their benefactors and done some other things. So the truest moral men do not want a reward for their virtue. They do not want eternal happiness, they are satisfied with a good conscience. The good conscience is not taken from him if he is run over by such a historical process. That does sound funny, doesn't it? But that is what he means. He goes beyond that and says that we should look at the moral man again and see that if he is really moral, he will not have a good conscience. He will know that he has good reason for having a bad conscience too, so he will not say that he is the absolutely innocent victim of these wicked conquerors; and therefore he will be still less moralized. More concretely, the victim of such a radical change is a losing party, an innocent man—legally innocent, without any question, but was he morally innocent? Did he not enjoy benefit of the injustice of the order which was destroyed? Think of the Roman Republic! A perfectly virtuous senator, a man who was benevolent and humane and all this sort of thing, but did he not by virtue of the fact that he was a senator derive enormous benefits from a rotten order? How can he morally protest against it? That is Hegel's point. In other words, he leaves it ultimately at that. Hegel's argument consists in demanding that the moral man be really moral and not merely shout moral protests without looking at himself. That is the vital point. I mean, one must really see that. The cases of Caesar, and Napoleon, and Alexander the Great are far away, so it doesn't sound so terrible; we would have to consider such things as the Russian Revolution and the Nazi revolution and consider whether Hegel would have said the same thing. This was both the Communists' and the Nazis' claim, but of that I am extremely doubtful. Yes?

Student: According to your example then, [the] historical process would still have to give equal punishment for unequal crimes and still be rational. I mean, the virtuous senator may be guilty but still less guilty than some others in Rome, but they have the same punishment by the process of history by being conquered.

LS: Yes. But Hegel would ask if it is possible, if it is reasonable, to expect the justice which we can reasonably expect from the law courts. Is it reasonable to expect such justice from history? I remember one example from my own experience, the question of the guilt of Germany in the Second World War. Disregarding the question of whether the beginning of a war was a legal crime since 1939, disregarding that entirely, in a moral

sense one could say these people were guilty of a great crime—Ribbentrop[xiv] and so on—but what about the German people? In a sense there is guilt insofar as the government has come to power legally, at least with the very powerful support of a substantial part of the community and accepted by them as their representative. What can this possibly mean[4] [for] human justice, justice done by human law courts? Nothing! But it can mean that Germany, who had the possibility of becoming the organizing power of Europe . . . you know, the united Europe, including of course the countries which are now in the Russian sphere. Germany had a kind of moderation, one could say, by virtue of her great administrative and other qualities, to create this empire as a true empire in the British and not the Nazi sense. Germany lost this forever, this possibility, and lost it in a particularly shameful way. This is a punishment; this is, one could say, what historical justice means. It is not a justice of the law courts.

As for other injustice, it is unreasonable to expect that every human merit is rewarded and every human demerit is punished altogether. That would make even criminal law unfeasible. You know there are terribly criminal things which are technically not crimes, or at least they can never be brought home as crimes. You are confronted with this question that should you get an impossible legal system, you may lose everything in order to guarantee that never a criminal will go unpunished. You know the famous defect of penal justice? Is it not better to allow some criminals to go unpunished in order that some innocent man may not be unjustly punished? Now that applies to international affairs even more than it applies to intranational affairs. I think Hegel was the most powerful critic of the moralistic attitude toward the great political issues. The question, for example, of Napoleon who gets the . . . wholly illegally and has him shot. You know that was really against all international law, and I am sure Hegel would never have defended that. There was no justification for that. But let us take the "murder," as they say now, of twenty million Russian peasants by Stalin—innocent flowers, we understand: What about that? Hegel could not argue from a moral point of view in the strictly narrow sense, but I think he would take a broad political view and say that a regime that establishes itself in this way, against such powerful resistance—and at a certain point numbers become meaningful, strangely—[xv]

—to the community as a whole, and therefore the Roman practice of decimation in the case of mutiny of every tenth man had much political wisdom. Communists claim that they were a movement made by the large majority on behalf of the large majority, and from this point of view it could claim with some justice that what is done in the interest of the large majority, by the large majority, is more important than mere legality. But does not what happened to the peasants prove [that] the claim to act on behalf of the majority and with its approval is simply untrue? Does it not destroy the legitimacy of that regime? That is an entirely different proposition, but it would be a political argument and no longer a legal argument. Similar considerations would apply to the Nazis. Yes?

Student: I was wondering . . . would not the communists throw this issue into the balance, I mean the number . . .

[xiv] Joachim von Ribbentrop was Foreign Minister of Nazi Germany from 1938 to 1945.
[xv] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: Yes. But if you think of the original conception of Marxism, it is of course not meant to be [for] men who are to [be] proletarianized in the future, but [for] those who are already proletarianized. One only has to read Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* to see how questionable this case is. Hegel has, later on in this book, made a remark about whether one can make a legal use, a use in political discussion proper, of this argument. Hegel found, I think, the kind of justice one could expect in the fact that these great builders and founders did not derive any personal benefit from their actions. The case of Napoleon he found to be perfectly in order. Yes?

Student: I just wondered, I am not sure, but is it not kind of effete of Hegel to assume that a conqueror such as Caesar or Alexander the Great or Napoleon was doing good, and that because Caesar took over the supposedly decadent Roman Republic that what he brought in was a better order?

LS: Yes, sure.

Student: I mean he might have a kind of wish-fulfillment in saying this old order was bad and that it is no longer bad when this man comes in.

LS: No, not quite. You must really look concretely, as Hegel would say, at the situation. There was the story of Marius, yes? The constant repetition of his consulship against the Roman law and practice.[xvi] And then there was Sulla and the proscriptions; and then the Triumvirates.[xvii] And all these things did not work; the Senate couldn't do anything [any]more. The reason that Pompey and Caesar united was the welfare of the Roman state. Compared with these two, the Senate didn't mean anything anymore. The question, therefore, was to face this fact and end the proscriptions, end all these other infernal things that were already there. That was Hegel's way of seeing this.

Student: Yes, but it is still hard to say whether the Roman Empire was better for the common man or the better classes than the Republic before it. I am not at all sure it was.

LS: Yes, but the question is not whether the Roman Republic at the time of Cannae[xviii] was superior to Caesar's Rome—that is a proposition which is tenable—but the question is rather whether Caesar's achievement is better than this abomination of the first pre-Christian century in Rome. Of course you could say: Look at Nero and look at all these other fellows. Surely. But Hegel would argue this way: The expression of Mediterranean culture at its best was the *polis*. The *polis* was based on slavery, and was exclusive and all this kind of thing also, but it was much better than any tribal existence and also greater

[xvi] Gaius Marius (157 BCE-86 BCE) held the office of consul an unprecedented seven times during his career.
[xvii] Sulla (c. 138 BCE-78 BCE) served as consul and dictator in Rome. The First Triumvirate, consisting of Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, lasted from 59 BCE to 53 BCE. The Second Triumvirate, consisting of Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus, lasted from 43 BCE to 33 BCE.
[xviii] At the Battle of Cannae, which took place in 216 BCE during the Second Punic War, the army of Carthage under Hannibal defeated the much larger army of the Roman Republic.

than the original oriental despotisms. But the *polis* had in itself a fundamental contradiction, and this contradiction showed itself in its necessity of conquest. Very roughly, that is Hegel's construction. So the process had to end in the paradoxy of one *polis* being ruler of the whole known inhabited world. There is a clear contradiction in the thought of a *polis*, a closely-knit small community being ruler of a whole world empire, and Caesar fundamentally solves this problem. It was no longer the *polis* of Rome, i.e., the citizen body of Rome assembled, but something like a monarchy. But now it was a monarchy of a different kind, a monarchy which had embodied the Greek heritage and which therefore had created the Roman law, the law of that whole Empire in which every human being could become a full citizen—when Paul could say he was a Roman citizen and mean something by it.

So Hegel would say that the Roman Empire, in spite of the abomination of those Caesars, was a more rational social organization than the *polis* was. Hegel's construction goes much beyond that and says that this Roman Empire had only one ruler and everyone else was a private man, not a slave—a private man and no longer a public man, no longer a citizen. The impoverishment of the whole society by this privatization made it require as its supplement, its foundation, a universal religion: Christianity. From this point he accepts the traditional Christian view that Jesus being born under Augustus was providential. I cannot now go into that. The point which I want to make clear, because it is absolutely crucial to the understanding of Hegel, is this rejection of what he would call a moralistic judgment on the great historical phenomena.

Now let me see . . . I mention perhaps a few other points which go with that. In the next section Hegel turns, after he discusses the ends and the means, to the materials of history. This distinction is not made in the English, but in the German on page 110 it begins. Here he says: "The material of the actualization of the end is the state."[xix] I do not believe that the distinction between "means" and "materials" is an exact expression. This distinction is not even a good distinction in the case of other ends. Take shoes, for example. The end is wearing the shoes, and what are the means? The material is leather, let us say, but what are the means? The material is leather, let us say, but what are the means? What does that mean? That is not a good distinction. The Aristotelian distinction was between end, agent, matter, and form. I believe this was only a convenient but by no means clear expression of what Hegel means for the following reason: because the state had already appeared—as you remember from the previous discussion—the first mediation of the merely subjective and the universal is law and the state, and therefore Hegel could very well have treated under the heading "means." I think it is a concession to the ordinary understanding that he begins again from the outside and from the beginning and says: Well, what is the primary subject-matter of history? We have seen that the end is the self-consciousness of the mind; the means are the passions, and especially the passions of the world historic individuals; and the matter that we deal with when we deal with history he says is the state.

[xix] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 110. Strauss paraphrases a bit here.

Now in this connection Hegel gives a relatively detailed discussion of the history of philosophy in the narrowest sense. I cannot discuss this today; I will only make a few points which are important to avoid a misunderstanding, gross misunderstanding.

In the first place, there occurs such statements as . . . I will read to you a few—they are also in the English—which amount to the state being absolutely an end in itself. One of the strongest is: "Everything which man is, he owes to the state. Only in the state does man have his substance. All value man has, all spiritual actuality he possesses only through the state."[xx] I think Hegel is very well known as a man who deified the state. There are quite a few expressions like this that have the same effect. It is not necessary to confirm that because it is so well known. Now one must make clear immediately what Hegel means by that. "The spiritual individual, the nation, to the extent which it is articulated within itself as an organic whole, is the state."[xxi] So the state is really the whole society. In this description, "state" is exposed to an ambiguity because one understands ordinarily by "state," in contradistinction to religion, science and art, only the political side. Here, however, state is taken in a more comprehensive sense. So state means the whole life of the individual, and that means especially religion. In religion the principle of a nation, of a people, is expressed in the most simple way, so the whole existence of a nation rests on religion. The whole life of a people, and especially religion but also its arts and sciences, this is what Hegel means by the state. That Hegel cannot be called a deifier of the state in the crude sense of the term can be shown by a famous terminological distinction that he makes. The state, in the narrower sense, belong to what he calls the "objective mind"; but higher than the "objective mind" is the "absolute mind," and that is religion, art, and philosophy. So this simplistic notion is from no point of view a tenable position. This does not mean that Hegel was a liberal. He makes very clear his radical opposition to liberalism. But this requires some more detailed discussion which must be postponed to the next meeting.

The relation between the state and religion is also absolutely crucial and another aspect of Hegel's opposition to liberalism. From Hegel's point of view, for example, a Catholic society and a Protestant society cannot possibly have the same political order. To understand the political as something merely technical, organizational, or what have you, is impossible. The state means at the same time a spirit, and without a spirit what you have is of no serious interest. It may be of administrative or bureaucratic interest, but no longer of true political interest. In other words, Hegel has the notion of Plato and Aristotle that the *politeia*, the political order, is the spirit of the whole society and not a mere physical arrangement which is fundamentally independent of [the] spirit of society. But this we must take up coherently next time.

Now I would like to find out if there is any particular difficulty with reference to the points which we have discussed today and which we might take up now for a few minutes? Yes?

[xx] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 111; *Philosophy of History*, 39.
[xxi] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 114.

Student: My question concerns Hegel's thesis of the rationality of history. You mentioned that the Marxist notion might have been received by Hegel as a crazy idea, and you also mentioned that he wouldn't have accepted the fascist regime in Germany as within the rationality of history. Would you comment on this?

LS: Yes. You see the point is that for Hegel the recognition of the rights of man—and that implies among other things, surely, a fair and independent judiciary—is absolutely essential to a civilized and respectable state. That couldn't exist under either of these two conditions. Hegel was in this sense a constitutionalist. The integrity of the judiciary, that the judiciary cannot be a more political instrument, went without saying. That is another thing, you know. Yes?

Student: I have another question. You point out the metaphysical differences between Plato-Aristotle and Hegel's philosophy. Can there be a natural law theory in the classical sense on the basis of [a] process metaphysics such as Hegel's?

LS: Yes. Hegel's philosophy of right has the title *Natural Right and the Philosophy of the State* . . . no, *Natural Right and Constitutional Law*,[xxii] so Hegel of course admitted natural right. What he would say is, for example, that the principles of property, the principles of the inviolability of the person, all this kind of thing, are things which do not depend on human arbitrariness or legal enactment but are the truly natural, rational principles which for Hegel cannot have been known always. You see, that is a problem which existed throughout the tradition, and I will try to make it clear. If you take the clearest and most explicit version of natural right doctrine, the Thomistic doctrine, man as man possesses by nature an awareness of the principles of natural law. Yes? Man as man. The technical term for that in Thomas is *synderesis*, which we can conveniently translate as conscience. Man as man possesses a conscience and by this very fact possesses a knowledge of the principle of natural right. He does not know the conclusions of these principles without a considerable effort, and most men will not know them by their own efforts at all, because they lack the experience, the sagacity, and so on. But such massive things as the prohibition against murder, everyone could know.

Now in the Thomistic doctrine proper, that created no difficulty because it was taken for granted that man was created by God in perfection. The question was only the Fall, and there the Thomistic teaching was clear: the Fall might have led to some obscuration but not to the deletion of the natural conscience, as it did according to some extreme Protestant or Calvinist doctrines. But from a philosophic point of view, a great difficulty arises here. You know that according to Thomas the creation of the world in time cannot be demonstrated, yes? That the world is the work of God can be demonstrated, but that this work had a beginning in time and was not an eternal work cannot be demonstrated. Therefore, from the philosophic or purely rational point of view, you cannot speak of a first man as created in time in perfection with integrity. So if the first men were then in each period savages, extremely uncivilized savages, their inborn understanding would not have been in any way actual. And here you come to the problem of Locke, which he

[xxii] More literally, the title is *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, or *Natural Law and Political Science in Outline*.

developed at great length in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. The problem becomes acute in this form: the natural law can have any validity only if it is promulgated, say, in the conscience, but this is not the case. If one cannot assume that it is duly promulgated, what validity can it have? Then it would only acquire validity in the process of civilization, when man becomes sufficiently rational to become aware of it. That was clearly the opinion of Kant and Hegel. What is changeable is only the imperfect versions, the Greek versions, the Old Testament versions, but the perfect version is unchangeable and has the status of natural right. But since it is not always knowable, it therefore, in a way, doesn't exist, because a natural law or right is only a law or right by virtue of its being known to be a law or right. Hegel is not a relativist; on the contrary, he is a big bogey for all relativists—you know, the absolutist, par excellence. And his *Philosophy of Right*—yes, the term natural right occurs in the title of the book: *Natural Right and Constitutional Law in Our Time* is the title. Yes?

Student: Hegel makes statements to the effect that God governs the . . . the mind working itself out in history is the mind of God, the rational order is designed by God?

LS: Yes. Designed would presuppose a full actuality of consciousness prior to the work itself. You have a perfect workmaster in the Platonic sense who designs the whole and then puts it into practice. Hegel is extremely ambiguous on this subject, and therefore he gave rise immediately to two schools: the right-wing Hegelians, and the left-wing Hegelians. And out of the left-wing Hegelians, but on the basis of a break with Hegel, came Marxism. The right-wing Hegelians took Hegel to be simply a believing Lutheran, no questions, and the others said he was an atheist. I believe that neither interpretation is really good, but certainly he was not a simple believer. Hegel says somewhere that the mind of God prior to the creation is what is presented in the *Logic*, but the *Logic* which presents the necessary connection among the most abstract principles, say, an eternal order, that this order implies a knower of that order is doubtful. In other words, it is doubtful whether Hegel did not mean that consciousness of freedom is achieved only in man; but since man is part of this whole order, this more than human order, you can say of course that this is God in man. And that is, I think, the way in which he tries to interpret the incarnation: that only by becoming man could God achieve the consciousness of himself. There are statements which are absolutely clear in one direction, and statements which are absolutely clear in the orthodox direction. One cannot settle the question by merely listing quotations. But that is clear. To say Hegel was an atheist is impossible from a purely atheistic point of view because the ultimate convergence of nature and the mind is wholly unintelligible. Hegel refused to be called a pantheist, but that was on the basis of a very narrow understanding of pantheism, pantheism as mere nature to the exclusion of mind in the Spinozistic sense. Of course he was not a pantheist in that sense. But if one understands the "pan" as the whole of nature and mind and the order linking them together, then it is a different story. The fight after his death and already in his lifetime turned around his theism, and then they said that he was not a theist, nor[5] [an atheist]; and then they said that he was a pantheist, meaning the whole is in God. This shows the difficulty.

No, I think Hegel accepted the Christian notion of incarnation as an expression in the element of the imagination of what he regarded as true, if understood non-imaginatively but rationally. That surely can be documented. But for him it is clear that only in philosophy, as distinguished from art and religion, can there be true understanding, understanding of the truth about God. In his *Phenomenology of the Mind* he describes with great precision that in the fight between orthodoxy and [Enlightenment] the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism is in this respect irrelevant. The dependence on revealed religion and scriptures is ultimately out of the question. The Enlightenment did not understand the deeper meaning of Christianity, but it was perfectly right in refuting the dogmatic meaning, for example, miracles. That there are no miracles is clear—the Enlightenment is right. But the thing which induced the believers to believe in miracles, and the truth in that, the Enlightenment did not understand. Hegel accepts the negations of the Enlightenment: inspired texts, miracles, and so forth, absolutely. There is no question about that. But he contends that the Enlightenment was completely blind to the substance of Christianity, and that this substance, however, was also misunderstood by the dogmatists, and that the truth in it is what is rational in it. And that is presented in Hegel's *Logic* or in his additional work.

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[1] Deleted "with"
[2] Deleted "actuated"
[3] Deleted "is"
[4] Deleted "of"
[5] Deleted "pan-theist"

Session 5: no date[i]

Student: [in progress] —they argue that Hegel approaches history with set ideas of what he is going to find, with set ideas of what he already believes before he approaches his subject matter.

Leo Strauss: All right. We have discussed that in an earlier meeting, but it is important enough to state it again. In the first place, Hegel would deny that he *believes* it—he would assert that he *knows* it, that he knows it on the basis of his *Logic* that reason rules history. This means that the historical process must be a movement toward the rational goal, i.e., full knowledge of the truth, let us say, full self-consciousness of the subject—of man. And going with that, of course, full knowledge of man's freedom which is not possible without expressing itself in institutions.

But let us not go into the details now. Hegel knows in advance through his *Logic*, but we haven't read his *Logic*, or if we have he didn't convince us. So Hegel says "all right" and does something a bit defensible in order to help us. He says that he will show us empirically the truth of his assertions. We shall look at the various historical phenomena, and then we will see that this process was a rational process. The difference between these two matters is only this: in the second case you see only that it has been in fact rational, but for purposes outside of philosophy the latter is ordinarily thought to be sufficient. So Hegel does not make the claim that this book is self-contained. Now where does this very great accusation of absolutism come in here?

Student: Well, by saying that the book is self-contained, which is an assertion in itself . . . well, any historian, it seems to me, that begins with what he knows he is looking for will find it.

LS: Yes, that is absolutely fatal in any other case, but Hegel denies that. In other words, if Hegel would do violence to the phenomena in order to impose upon it his opinions, that would be absolutely impossible, yes? But Hegel denies that he is doing that. He says that he proceeds in this world, he proceeds empirically, but as an intelligent empiricist. That is his claim. In other words, if you get lost in the pedigree of Dolley Madison,[ii] say, then you are not really a historian. You might use certain techniques that historians are using, but that is not the intelligent question. Any intelligent historian is distinguished from the unintelligent historian in that he knows how to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. Everyone admits that; even the unintelligent must admit that. In other words, they have to admit something they really don't understand. But the question is: What is meant by important and unimportant? There is a rough commonsense understanding, of course, which shows that certain questions are silly and only an unintelligent man would bother with them. But Hegel then says that he determines what is important and unimportant in the most objective way possible, especially when the

[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 4.
[ii] Dolley Madison (1768-1849), First Lady of the United States from 1809-1817, was wife of President James Madison.

historian treats human beings other than himself. Why? He regards as most important what a human society regards as most important.

Now here the question comes up immediately today of making a poll. And then some people would say that Marilyn Monroe is the most important individual in this country, and you might get a majority. Hegel would say that this is nonsense. He does not want to know what silly individuals think; he wants to know what this society, properly assembled as a society, thinks. Then one would look at the United States Constitution and authentic interpretations of that, and so on, and so get a view. Or take another, more primitive society: he would raise the question of what these people bow to. I mean, when things become serious in war and when confronted with death, then I see what is important to them. I have been told by certain Chinese that the Chinese travelers in olden times, when they came to witness one of the tribes at the borders of China, the first question they ask is: How do they bow to their kings or gods or whatever may be? That is of course a very intelligent approach; it is only a bit misleading in that they raise the question of how they bow instead of first raising the question to whom or what. That is a point—I mean, they have a direction. That is what Hegel means. Hegel contends that in this way he gives states in Europe, in central Africa, the Aztecs, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Jews, the Christians, the Catholics, and the Protestants an opportunity to make their speech—yes?— their assertions regarding the most important things. And then he says that if he goes over these most authentic statements and reads them as thoughtful men should, then he gets a sequence of increasing rationality, say, from the African statements up to the Protestant statements. That is what Hegel contends. But he would say that this has nothing to do with private preferences, and he can show that.

Student: The only problem that I am not at all clear on is that although he might be asking the same questions of the sources, of the documents, another Hegel or another interested person approaching history the same way as Hegel might very well ask the same questions and come up with a very different interpretation of what that society believes, because the men in that society are themselves not consistent.

LS: Hegel makes occasionally the very wise remark that it is a very unfair approach to a man to say that he does not know what he says, because it is extremely difficult to know, to fully understand what one says. So Hegel is aware of this difficulty.

Student: The thing is that he must recognize himself as a man, and as a man he has limitations on what he can comprehend in his subject matter.

LS: No! That would be denied by Hegel, very quietly. I mean, Hegel was not an arrogant man at all. When you read his more personal statement[s], it is absolutely amazing, the noble selflessness. He is not a boaster at all. But he would, in all humility, in all modesty . . . Someone else, Spinoza for example, makes occasionally the remark that he *knows* that he knows the truth; and Hegel would claim that for himself without any question. But does not every philosopher make such a claim? I am not speaking now of professors of philosophy; that is a profession which is a very respectable profession but which is not philosophy itself—that would be a gross miscarriage of justice. One would

do gross injustice if one would say that they are philosophers—that is a very difficult and long question. But does not every *philosopher* raise that claim? Even if you take Kant, who says that the most important questions are not answerable, that is in itself a most important answer. No, surely Hegel would raise this claim. And it depends on concrete discussions in all these matters, but we would have to take an alternative. Let us take Hegel's view of the Greeks and what he says about the Greek gods, which would of course be a most important theme of his philosophy of history, and let us see if it is true. Hegel would not do . . . Ranke, you know, the founder of modern history, critical history—there was a deep antagonism between these two men. Ranke makes the remark, as I saw by accident, that in all historical studies research must be a part of the presentation. By this he meant that there are certain issues that must be decided on the basis of oral negotiations, and so there are no authentic records. You know? And then the appreciation of what you know of these oral negotiations is absolutely critical for your result. And Ranke says the critical discussion of this is essentially a part of history. This makes absolute sense to me. Now Hegel does not make his research a part of his presentation. If he makes a certain assertion regarding the Greek gods, he refers in a general way to Homer, to Hesiod, and if there should be a difficulty, say, that Homer has two views of theology, then we are confronted with the question as to which view is the Homeric view. You won't find a discussion in Hegel. I regard this as a defect, yes. But that we must see—whether Hegel's method is not too sweeping. That would be your objection as an historian?

Student: Well, as an apprentice historian, I would look at it that way.

LS: Well, I am also in a sense a historian, and I understand your difficulty.

Student: I understand why he would do this, but that every philosopher would say that what he says is true . . .

LS: Not in this way! For instance, Aristotle would follow a much more empirical method in this respect than Hegel would. Aristotle would say that in such matters of fact you would have to follow the appropriate method for establishing matters of fact. I mean, you would first have to show with what right you can take Homer as representative of the Greeks. That is the first question. Now there is plenty of evidence in favor of this view, but it should be represented and contrasted with alternatives. Surely! There would be a difficulty, to say nothing of more specific questions, where Hegel had to rely on second- and third-hand sources—on everything not connected with the Western world. Of what he said about China, India, Africa, and America he had no first-hand knowledge, whereas classical literature and modern European literature he knew marvelously well.

Student: That seems to be a general criticism of many philosophies of history, that . . . I haven't read Toynbee,[iii] but I hear that people consider his work brilliant except that part which deals with what they know.

[iii] Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) was a British historian best known for his twelve-volume *A Study of History* (1934-61).

LS: Yes, that is exactly my case. I read the part of his work which I know most, and it was simply and all derivative from the common opinions in the field. In other words, not even original in any way. Sure. I am sure that this conclusion would be made by every specialist in every field, and so the only merit would be in the possible meaningfulness of the overall point of view. But if I understand your objection correctly, you mean to say that a philosophy of history is strictly speaking not possible?

Student: Oh, I don't want to make that claim either, but I am sure that many people would make this claim. I would rather leave it up in the air. It is just that this difficulty in making a philosophy of history of a man's limitations should be recognized.

LS: Oh, you mean as far as knowledge goes?

Student: As far as knowledge goes and as far as his statements go, that what he says may not be correct even though he has every right to make this statement.

LS: I see. Yes, that is a sound point: that one should never talk about any subject, at least in public, about which one does not have first-hard knowledge. That would mean, in practice, that one could never speak in public with any claim of correctness about any literature or theology or whatever it may be that is written in a language which one cannot read. I am all in favor of that. Sure. Then one would have to say that certain demands which we now make regarding accuracy were not sufficiently recognized by Hegel. Yes, I would go along with that, but the question is how relevant is this for a judgment of Hegel's philosophy as a whole? I believe that if there is a Hegelian at all today—because some people who call themselves Hegelians are simply Marxists and conceal themselves behind the more respectable and more general type—but if there are any Hegelians today, they would say that of course Hegel's philosophy must be rewritten, because quite a few things wholly unknown in his time have come to light and are important. Sure.

Is this sufficient for our present purposes, or has anyone else anything to bring up regarding this problem of the minimum requirements of accuracy and the very idea of a philosophy of history? He implied, of course, that we cannot possibly know what important historical discoveries might come up in the future and that a philosophy of history like Hegel's claims to be definitive in all important points. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, sure, he would say that. That was a crucial point for him. He would say there are no secrets in these matters. I mean, we can be deceived about the character of a given individual; for example, a man may be greatly admired as perfectly virtuous in his private life and then we find out through newly-discovered documents that he was free from all private virtue. Hegel would say that was quite interesting and that he must be very clever in concealing it, but fundamentally that doesn't mean a thing because he had already allowed for that in the thesis that what makes a man a world-historic individual, as he calls it, is not private virtue. You know? And therefore it is really irrelevant whether

Caesar was particularly chaste or not. We would say that is irrelevant anyway. So there are no secrets. That it was Caesar who destroyed the Roman Republic and led the foundation of the Roman Empire proper, and that this was an action which could very well be accused of illegality, is clear. But that this issue transcended the legal is also clear. These are things which everyone knows, yes? And those are the issues. And the little things like whether Caesar should have cheated Pompey on a particular occasion or vice versa is uninteresting. Hegel was a philosopher in this precise sense: that he did not have too great an admiration for the non-philosophic sciences. That is quite clear. I mean, he did not discourage them, but they do not come within the dimension where the real problems of men are at stake. That goes through this whole work. He would say the same thing of the empirical sciences, not only regarding history proper.

Student: The only thing I would say to what you just said is that not only the small points are out of line but maybe the big points are out of line too, if another person approached them.

LS: Yes?

Student: That a different individual may have come up with different conclusions.

LS: Yes, but that can of course be very trivial. I mean, there is no subject whatever, even subjects which have been treated by very careful and very intelligent men, which does not have someone around, and usually more than one, who doesn't accept it. Then you arrive at Gallup polls.

Student: That is what it becomes in the end.

LS: No, that is impossible; that is the most stupid solution to any problem.

Student: I don't mean that Gallup polls are valid, I just mean . . .

LS: No. I mean it is absolutely impossible! It is evident, it is rationally evident that these questions cannot be decided by majority vote. Absolutely impossible. It may not be possible to decide them at all, but the Gallup poll is the least possible way of solving them. You know? Really. Whoever has done any work in any serious field knows how rare the number of people is who are really serious. Amazing. Very sad, but unfortunately true. Especially as one gets older, one gets what may look like intolerance but which is simply prudence based on some experience that most of the literature cannot be taken too seriously. That is so. That doesn't mean that here and there and in even the worst study there is something worthwhile—maybe he refers to another article, polemicizing against it, which is really a worthwhile article and you would not have heard of that article—that is true, but generally speaking this is not the case. And the silly procedure of most American universities of forcing everyone to publish—a jet liner race—increases this calamity still more. We are now very close to this procedure in this country. I understand that in France they have a list in the Ministry of Instruction where every academic teacher is listed, and one line lists pages of publication. Well, let us forget about this, although it

is by no means irrelevant to our subject matter, because there are quite a few people who write on Hegel who are involved.

Now let us take up a few more points which are important in this introduction process. History is rational, to repeat Hegel's thesis, for its end is rational: full actualization of the mind. But the means for the historical process are the passions, the merely subjective wills. How then can the process be rational? Hegel's general answer is that the subjective wills, the merely arbitrary wills, one can say, cannot coexist without law, and law is the universal. Now if we have these principles of justice and look at them, we see that they are all converging eventually to a complete principle of justice. They are all partial. The real difficulty is this: that by admitting that the means of history are the passions, as Hegel says, he admits in fact what seems to be the immorality of the process. Let us state the problem strongly: the historical process has a moral end but the moral end is achieved by immoral means. That is the problem. This problem is now known particularly through Marx, but it has a long prehistory prior to Hegel. Who is the most important pre-Hegelian writer of whom one would think, with the problem stated this way?

Student: Machiavelli?

LS: Yes. I mean, because however he was altogether, there was still something of a moral end in Machiavelli, sometimes even overstated. So there is something which Hegel has in common with Machiavelli, there is no question about that. But Hegel specified the problem in this way: the possible immorality itself consists in the fact that its uses human beings as mere means. Hegel's answer to this—I repeat it—is [that] what the moral individual as a moral man can desire is the victory of morality, the victory of justice; and this, Hegel says, is what actually happens in the historical process: justice wins in the end. What he can desire for himself or for any other individual is not happiness but good conscience, and this good conscience is not interfered with by his destruction, to say nothing of minor forms of destruction like confiscation of property or exile. Hegel goes beyond that: Can this individual have a good conscience? Is he so good that he can have a good conscience or, more particularly, does he not derive benefit from an unjust social order? Think of a very nice Roman senator of Cicero's time, perhaps Cicero himself, and Caesar or Caesar's party destroys him. But was not his destruction an inevitable consequence of the destruction of the Republican regime in Rome, and was not this a perfectly legitimate treatment of a perfectly rotten regime? Cicero had his reward; he was a highly esteemed consul of the Republican regime in connection with the Catilinarian affairs and other affairs, and his glory lasted forever. But he was so inseparable from the Republican regime in its rottenness that what Caesar or Augustus did was justified on this larger ground.

The second point which Hegel makes regarding the moralistic criticism of history . . . We take, perhaps, the passage on page 31 in the English, paragraph 4, and in the German on page 102.

Student: "In the light of the . . . what pedagogue has not demonstrated—"[iv]

[iv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 31-32.

LS: The word is a bit stronger in the German: "schoolmaster," in the sense of the fellow who bangs foreheads if the homework is not done. "Pedagogue" is a bit too dignified a translation for the German word. I would not know what the English translation would be.

Student: I think it would be schoolmaster.

LS: Schoolmaster? Does it also have this derogatory meaning? Today it would be "schoolmarm"—but they are not so strict, I believe, as the old-fashioned schoolmasters were. All right, go on.

Student: "What 'schoolmarm' has not demonstrated . . . 'No man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*,' is a well-known proverb; I have added—and Goethe repeated it ten years later—"[v]

LS: You see Hegel also had a bit of pettiness, but you must admit that to be quoted by Goethe means a bit more than to be quoted by a colleague for whom you have a mutual admiration. Yes.

Student: [reading inaudible][vi]

—desire for good living or for wealth or prestige, but the desire for glory; and therefore the moralist thesis is that a man must not be driven by desire for glory but exclusively by public spirited dedication to justice. Hegel says this distinction is untenable because the desire for glory[1], the desire for the recognition of superiority, is absolutely essential for the recognition of a new conception of justice. Say someone has a new conception of justice which transcends the established order; he is fully dedicated to it, he has nothing in mind but the ideal. He cannot possibly fight for that without becoming recognized as superior, and therefore it doesn't make any difference what role his concern for superiority played in his motives.

Now this, again, is an old question, and perhaps discussed more profoundly in Plato's *Republic*. In the *Republic*, Plato's chief interlocutor could be said to be Glaucon, who is a young and very ambitious young man. Being ambitious but somehow also a decent chap, he doesn't quite know how he stands if justice has no relation whatever to self-interest. Or it must have some relation? Therefore he doesn't know whether Thrasymachus is right or Socrates is right. Now Socrates tacitly treats him as follows. You are a very ambitious young man. If you were very honest with yourself, you would play with the thought that you wish to be a tyrant, the absolute ruler of Athens. Everyone should take orders from you, and everyone should bow to you. That is so: that happens. How does Socrates proceed? He shows him a perfect city, not the empirical city of Athens in all its defects. More than that, he shows him two Glaucons: Glaucon as the founder of a perfect city, and

[v] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 32.
[vi] The tape was changed at this point.

Glaucon the tyrant. Is there not a much greater glory in being the first founder of a perfect city than in being the mere exploiter of a city founded by someone else—a tyrant?

And then that is not enough, because in order to found that city, he must know much more than public administration: he must know the soul of man, and this is not possible without knowing the whole. So the true founder of a city can only be a philosopher who has completed his business of philosophy; and therefore, following the quest for eternal glory, he sees that this can only be fully realized by full devotion to the finding of the truth. And in this man who is fully dedicated to the truth the distinction between founder and tyrant becomes meaningless. You know? Because he knows he cannot find his satisfaction in anything except in the knowledge of truth. The distinction becomes meaningless. Truly external and universal glory cannot be had at any other price than complete knowledge of the truth, because that must be recognized by man sooner or later as the act of bringing man the light. So in this respect Hegel—and you can see that Hegel can make very good jokes—presents the same issue.

The question which comes up here and is of crucial importance for us in a way every day is that of our political judgment. Hegel has a very deep contempt for political moralizing. That is quite clear. He has contempt for men who pass moral judgment while sitting on the back seat with no responsibility, or maybe having responsibility but not knowing what responsibilities are. I think the most striking example of what Hegel means which I have experienced in my lifetime was the British Labour Party in the '30's with their "Resist aggression and resist rearmament." That was such a beautifully thought-through policy, you know. So Hegel implies, and I can understand that, that while these men were very virtuous, especially the one—who was that? Bevin, who said that they stop and carry Lansbury's conscience around on a silver platter . . . [vii] What Hegel says, in a way, is that it is really much more immoral and downright political immorality, and it is dangerous because of its pretenses. Another formula is of course: "Trust in public opinion." That is another version of what Hegel had in mind as really immoral if you want to use more judgment. This means, as a pupil of Hegel put it, to expect others to do what one is too lazy to do oneself. The public opinion taker doesn't take care of anything, whether it is national or international.

That is, I think, an important political point which Hegel makes throughout his work. Whether the Hegelian remark has posed all of the difficulties of a conflict between morality and politics is an entirely different question. But the point is, I think, how much irrelevance is hidden behind a merely moralistic criticism. I take an example from Burke. Burke discusses in one of his writings[viii]—I am not sure which—this question. There has been a rebellion, and that is grave, a capital crime. What about punishment of that crime?

[vii] At the Labour Party conference in October of 1935, after George Lansbury had delivered a passionate speech in favor of pacifism, Ernest Bevin rebuked him, declaring: "It is placing the Executive and the Movement in an absolutely wrong position to be hawking your conscience round from body to body asking to be told what to do with it."

[viii] Edmund Burke, "Some Thoughts on the Approaching Executions," in *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 199-209.

From a strictly moral point of view everyone should receive punishment, a punishment fitting the crime. In many cases this is a capital punishment. Governments do not do that. Why? Because they weigh the legal consideration against the broader consideration of what law is for, namely, the existence, preferably on a higher level, of political society as a whole. And therefore such practices as the Romans', of decimating a legion instead of killing everyone, is approached. This indicates what Hegel means: the political considerations, the broad considerations, are the truly moral considerations as far as these grave and all-encompassing questions are concerned. [2][These kinds] of moralists take it very easy; they don't face the complexity of the problem. One cannot say that Hegel is an immoralist. In spirit, he is very far from that. Needless to say, Hegel is helped in this presentation by his certainty that a radical breach of law, what we call a revolution, is the victory of a higher concept of justice over a lower concept of justice. In the moment this premise becomes doubtful, one will become somewhat hesitant to accept Hegel's proposition. Do you see the connection?

Student: About everything but this higher concept of justice.

LS: Yes. That is Hegel's implication; disregarding minor accidents, of course, but on the whole the later social order is the higher social order. And that is a break with the older view. I mean, I think that Plato and Aristotle also knew that the simple moral view is not sufficient, but they did not go so far as Hegel did because they were absolutely uncertain as to the overall character of the historical process of which Hegel claims to be sure. Are there any other questions which you would like to bring up regarding Hegel's apparent or real immoralism?

You see from this example the crucial importance of the philosophy of history for his whole philosophy, because only on the basis of his philosophy of history can we take this particular position which Hegel ridicules with some justice regarding morality in politics. The old-fashioned schoolmaster would have received a somewhat better treatment, we can be sure, at the hands of Plato and Aristotle. I mean, Plato and Aristotle would also find it convenient for him, who probably didn't make any moral effort to speak of in his life, to pass judgment too easily. But as for the substantive question, I do not know whether Aristotle, who knew Alexander the Great better than any other philosopher, would not have had a similar judgment. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No. Really. What about this moral individual? I mean, if anyone fights from morality pure and simple, he must have a perfectly clean record—not only public. Can anyone justly demand that?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Well, if he is properly enlightened, he would not make this progress. That is what Hegel means. You know only a moralist who has not understood the complexity of

morality as Hegel did would take this stand. I do not know whether I understood you, and therefore I do not know whether my answer is appropriate.

Student: I don't know whether that thoroughly eliminates certain qualities . . .

LS: Yes, well Hegel thinks in terms of the slaughter bench, and no one can deny that the history of mankind is the history of war. That is what he has in mind. I don't think that he thought in particular of plain bestiality. That has no rhyme or reason whatever. Is not war as such a terrible thing? What examples do you think Hegel has in mind? Do you mean, for example, the Jacobin rule in France? The Terror? Hegel may be perfectly vivid in saying that such a rule is necessarily self-destructive. It was based on terror and nothing but terror. Therefore Hegel tries to show in his construction that given certain premises, and given precisely the moralism of Robespierre—he demanded one hundred percent republican integrity, which is a condition of the heart—that this is identical with terror. With ordinary legal procedures, you can never find out if you have one hundred percent integrity. You have to use torture. That is perfectly clear. Everyone has his weak spots, and if you want to be sure that no one has any weak spots, then you have to use methods of torture. The end you achieve is small, but that is the logic of your demand for one hundered percent loyalty, republican virtue. Hegel thought the same thing, and he would see the proscriptions of Marius and Sulla as signs of the rottenness of the whole regime rather than something which in itself belonged to the process of regeneration. The process of regeneration was the civil war in which Caesar beat down Pompey, and later on when Augustus beat down the senatorial party and afterwards, Anthony. I do not know what your precise difficulty is.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: On the contrary! Hegel encourages you to feel that. There are eloquent passages on that. He would say that you are not a human being if you did not feel that, but you must be able to live beyond that.

Student: I don't quite understand the passage where he says that the process sort of works through world-historic individuals. Is that according to Hegel just empirically so, or must it necessarily work through great men?

LS: I am sure he means that it must necessarily be so, although I would be at a loss to reconstruct for you Hegel's argument. I believe he never gave it. It would probably say that the enormous difficulty of the task, both intellectual and moral, would require such a concentration of power and also other qualities that only an outstanding individual could perform it. And the fact that these great decisive changes were all connected with one individual—Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar, or Napoleon—is an empirical fact. Is this empirical fact not indicative of a necessity? Part of the argument I think you would find in Descartes's *Discourse on Method*, where Descartes discusses the question of whether a fundamental change can be made by anyone, by a body of men as distinguished from an individual[ix]—a fundamental change. I can only dogmatically tell

[ix] Renè Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, part 2.

you that the whole trend of the argument about the world-historic individuals implies that it must be so. I am not able offhand to reproduce Hegel's implicit argument.

Student: If history is the rational process working itself out, is the rational process of history . . . That is, are they identical, and without the one, you cannot have the other?

LS: That is what it means, yes, although the argument would run a bit different for both sides.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: In other words, if Caesar had died as a baby, then thirty years later some other individual would have done the same thing?

Student: That seems to be implied.

LS: Yes, that is a great difficulty. I see it most clearly in Trotsky's discussion, because Marxism takes over this completely—of course not with the same emphasis on liberalism, but in fact they make the same emphasis by what is shown in what is called the personality cult. I mean there is some necessity even there which is Hegelian, non-Marxist; that is Trotsky's discussion of the significance of Lenin for the Russian Revolution. Speaking empirically, on the basis of what he had seen, Trotsky comes to the conclusion that if Lenin hadn't been there it would not have happened. He really says so. There were enormous odds against this sort of thing, and the special qualities of Lenin, his toughness and facility and so on, could have been supplied by no one else. But he says that if Lenin would not have been there, something else would have been done, say, a kind of extreme White Russian dictatorship, or a kind of constitutional monarchy or constitutional republic; and this would not have worked, because it could not have worked, and the whole thing would have had to [have] been done over in an entirely different way and by an entirely different individual. The only way in which some stability could be established was Lenin's solution. So in other words, I think that even in this communist, this Marxist statement, Lenin gets more than a mere . . . I mean that the difference between Lenin in this case and Catiline in Rome is more than that Catiline had bad luck and Lenin had good luck. That is what [is] meant by the epitaph "One goes down to ignominy and the other goes up to glory for equally accidental reasons." That is not so. I think Hegel would say that Catiline was really a much lesser man; [he had] much less vision, much less of the other qualities. We have sufficient evidence about Caesar's personal qualities. Don't forget Hegel's remark about the valet and the hero: it meant that these are real heroes.

Student: That Caesar was somehow superior, no one could doubt. That was not the question. The question is whether that which is most characteristic of political glory, you know, that the hero would have been fundamentally different, seems to be removed—except that it supplies the grounds for the whole character to be in me rather than in you, and that it is ten years before rather than ten years after doesn't seem to make a great deal of difference.

LS: But speaking of glory, worldly glory, that is to say, in non-religious terms . . . Is the glory of Mohammed affected by the fact that Mohammed, for his consciousness, and for the consciousness of every believing Muslim, owes his greatness to election by his Allah? It is the same problem, I believe.

Student: But that isn't dependent on the consciousness being put into anyone else.

LS: No. What does Hegel mean? Hegel would say that the rank of a historical individual depends also on the rank of the cause to which he has dedicated himself. Surely it depends on his private virtues, intellectual and moral, but it depends also on these other things. Now which task is the higher? The foundation of something radically novel which is at the same time morally and intellectually superior, or preserving the old order? Think of the old notion of the founder, the founder of a city, you know, who received honors as a hero in his city. Hegel would say that he only founded a city; this might be a respectable city, say, Corinth or whatever. But was it fundamentally the same thing all over again, another *polis*? If someone thinks of the entirely new form of political organization than the *polis* altogether, has the vision to see the possibility for that, he is a founder in a much more radical sense than the founder of this other city; therefore he is a hero in a much deeper sense.

Student: Of course that goes without saying, but the question is whether he was forced by the moment, by the circumstances, presumably . . .

LS: Hegel would say that to be able to be forced by historical necessity is itself a great quality. Our good schoolmaster could not be forced by any historical necessity to be anything but a schoolmaster. Yes?

Student: The superiority is clear but . . .

LS: Hegel would say that you are pleading for caprice. That is what his personal objection would be. We must take a higher criterion than the mere personal genius, regardless of the object to which the genius dedicates itself. Now if we disregard the object and consider only the subject, then he makes the subjective will, i.e., caprice, the only consideration, and we abandon reason altogether. Can we really see? I mean, occasionally we see, I confess, mere giftedness and are impressed by it, but I think that is always an incomplete judgment. You know there are some writers, and they can be great writers, who are concerned, and not necessarily for low reasons, with displaying their talents. Still, I would say that these men would not be of interest to us if there were not also objective grounds for admiring them—I mean, what they say and what they are concerned with.

Student: All this is true, but in some sense I thought that the measure of greatness was the indispensability of the man.

LS: I don't know whether Hegel would not say that assuming that Napoleon had not turned up, that something like what Napoleon did would have come out in a rather trivial way: there would be certain changes in legislation, the old forms of property would be destroyed and replaced by new ones, the old marriage laws replaced by new ones—all that Napoleon did in his Code Civil, and so on. But somehow the fact that this was done in a way which the French symbolically represented by the Arc de Triomphe, this enormous change in the social order makes so much more sense when accompanied by the greatest military glory of France. This is really the rational thing. The other thing could have happened, but then something of the meaning of the thing, the greatness of the French Revolution, would have been lost. But I would still say that you must not minimize the fact that in most of these situations, and certainly in the most famous of these situations, we are confronted with a single outstanding individual. That has to be accounted for by you also.

Because we have so many things to take care of, let us turn to the next great item and that concerns Hegel's political philosophy in the narrowest sense. Let us look at page 38, top paragraph. We don't have to read the whole, just towards the end.

Student: "This essential being is the union . . . of particular and limited desires."[x]

LS: Do you recognize something in this?

Student: Anti-Rousseau?

LS: Not Rousseau so much, but Locke. I mean, you can also say Rousseau to some extent, but Hegel did not think of Rousseau so much, as I think I can show later. But one can say that the "common miracle" view is attacked by Hegel. Freedom must not be understood to be the securing of a private sphere. That is the decisive point. Or as Hegel develops it later in an explicit discussion of the notion of a state of nature: man is not primarily free in the state of nature and does not enter society on this condition—I mean the condition being that he is willing to abandon part of his natural freedom in order that he be secured in the most important part of that natural freedom by this self-limitation. That is rejected by Hegel. Hegel says that freedom must be reasonable freedom, and this reasonable freedom must not consist in doing what one likes, be it only in this private sphere; but freedom consists in doing the reasonable, i.e., in obeying, for example, as reasonable law, positively.[xi]

Now in this point I wouldn't think of Rousseau; another thinker is more obviously used here by Hegel, although he used a somewhat different language: Aristotle. He says the general will must not be a means for the private will; in Rousseau it is fundamentally that the general will is the means for the private will. It is complicated in Rousseau, I grant that, but fundamentally this is so. For Aristotle's thesis, the *polis* is prior to the individual, and that is what Hegel means. Only in the membership in the civil society does freedom possibly consist, not by getting a guarantee of a certain private sphere, for

[x] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 38.
[xi] See Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 40-41.

example—that is negative freedom. Positive freedom is membership in civil society, and this membership means to regard your obeying, your living for the laws, as your true freedom.

I read to you another passage which is not translated in the English edition, on page 115 in the German: "Only the will which obeys the law is free, for only that will obeys itself and therefore is free."[xii] In other words, if you do what you like, you follow your subjective will and caprices, and then you are not free, you are a slave of your whim. You are truly free only if you follow what is reasonable in itself, and that you can do only if you obey the law. If the subjective will subjects itself, subjects events to the law, the opposition of freedom and necessity disappear. Necessity is the reasonable and the substantial, and we are free if we recognize it as law and follow it as the substance of our own beings. The objective and the subjective wills are then reconciled and are one and the same. Here you see clearly the formulation of Rousseau in this later passage. Yes? I mean that only the will which obeys the law is free.

Now let us get a provisional understanding of this point by understanding the difference between Hegel and Aristotle, and then the difference between Hegel and Rousseau. Now what is the difference between Hegel and Aristotle, although they have very much in common here? Would Aristotle say that only the will which obeys the laws is free? I mean, Aristotle is as much opposed as Hegel to the liberal view according to which true freedom is the subjective freedom which is only limited for its own benefit by law, and therefore you obey the law only as a means for your private ends. That is opposed by both Aristotle and Hegel. But what is the difference between Aristotle and Hegel at this point? To obey the law, Hegel says, means to obey reason. That is the crucial point. Would Aristotle admit that?

Student: Laws are never wholly reasonable.

LS: Or at least not altogether reasonable. Yes. As Aristotle puts it: "The legal is *somehow* the just,"[xiii] meaning that law as law, however stupid and terrible, has an element of rationality in itself merely by being law. And you have only to read the records of some tyrannical governments to see how true that is. If they had obeyed their own laws, there would have been some limitations which in fact did not exist. You know? So, for example, the German judges tried to oppose certain actions of the Nazi party by referring to the laws, because Hitler as legislator could not dare to publish laws which would have satisfied Hitler's private sphere or the sphere of his stormtroopers. So the law as law and a public statement was some form of limitation. This is what Aristotle means in saying that the legal is *somehow* the just—but only somehow, because it may be terribly unjust and terribly unreasonable. Now what conclusion does Aristotle draw from this? Aristotle, in other words, says that laws are not necessarily reasonable. Is Hegel so foolish as to say that laws are necessarily reasonable? All laws? Of course not. But here is a very obscure point: Hegel's general tendency to assume a convergency of the is and the ought conceals this problem.

[xii] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 115.
[xiii] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 5, chapter 1.

Now let us look for a moment at the relation between Hegel and Rousseau—I mean in a very general way. This statement which I read to you is simply taken from Rousseau: "The will which obeys the law is free because it obeys itself." *Social Contract*, book 1, chapter 8, and other passages as well. What is the difference between Hegel's concept of law and Rousseau's concept. Why is Rousseau so certain that you obey yourself when you obey the law?

Student: Because you have a hand in making the law.

LS: Absolutely! In other words, the legality of the law is guaranteed by your having a say in the making of the law. Yes. And this is completely refused by Hegel. Hegel denies this very principle of democracy. So in other words, Rousseau also had the possibility of which he availed himself to say that there are unreasonable laws. Yes? He went so far as to say that practically all the laws of Europe of his time were not laws at all because they were imposed by monarchs and not adopted by a freely voting citizen body.

Student: But Rousseau wouldn't be generally applicable because of that statement. Didn't he say that these other things were not laws? What would people who didn't live in Geneva have?

LS: I am not now concerned with whether Rousseau's doctrine did not have very grave defects of its own; I am only trying to understand Hegel by contrasting him with Aristotle on the one hand, and Rousseau on the other.

Student: But Hegel does say that these others are laws, so then Hegel is more broad.

LS: Yes. He would say that the laws of the other regimes are of course laws, but not rational laws. Hegel is always thinking of a rational society. This is a problem which I will try to take up later. Now both Aristotle and Rousseau, however much they differ among themselves, take it for granted that "is" will be different from the "ought." Somehow Hegel assumes the convergence of the is and the ought, and this assumption is proven as sound by his philosophy of history because it proves that history is rational. The absence of a philosophy of history in Aristotle as well as in Rousseau is the reason for the fundamental difference between them and Hegel. Another example which shows that Hegel's philosophy of history is absolutely critical for his political philosophy in particular.

Now there is also another problem which is closely connected with that. On page 43 in the English, and page 138 in the German—we cannot read that now—there is the point that constitutions cannot be made. This aspect is another critical difference between Hegel on the one hand, and both Aristotle and Rousseau on the other. Aristotle's *Politics* is a book on the making of constitutions, there is no doubt about that. Whether we like it or not, that is so. And Rousseau of course had exactly this in mind: how to establish a constitution. Constitutions cannot be made, Hegel says, in any significant sense of the term, because they are determined by the spirit of the nation. You have to understand the

spirit of the nation, and then there are some technical things which technicians of constitutions might do, but that is an uninteresting problem. You are never confronted with a choice as far as the principles are concerned.

We should read one passage on page 47, second paragraph, and in the German on page 143. Another passage regarding the constitution.

Student: "The state is the idea of spirit . . . nothing (so to speak) can be learned."[xiv]

LS: You know, that is directed[3] [at] the French Revolution and especially the Jacobins, [4][who] made a constant appeal to Rome.

Student: "And in science and art it is quite . . . has become a rooted prejudice."[xv]

LS: Hegel rejects that, you see.

Student: "On this theory where the people . . . architecture the ancients knew nothing."[xvi]

LS: Because this is only an achievement of the Christian times. Yes? At least in this presentation. I will come to this in a moment. Is the main point clear? If we vote in a representative government, Hegel says that we vote in fact as Mr. X, a private man, and we think of our private interests; we do not necessarily act as citizens in the act of voting. That we formally must be citizens in order to vote goes without saying, but that does not guarantee that our subjective will in the act of voting is that of a citizen and not merely that of a private man with private concerns while voting. Therefore the representative form of constitution is not the solution to the political problem, and there must be some form of government which owes its being not to the popular will as the sum of all private will[s]. This is the crucial point, and in his *Philosophy of Right* he claims it can be had only in a monarchy of a certain kind, and a monarchy which rules in fact with a highly trained body of public servants.

But there is another point of broader importance to which I must devote some time, and that is the remark at the end about this "achievement of the Christian times." This concerns the relation of the state, the political, to religion, and here Hegel's statements are very powerful and clear. I will read only one passage because the time is getting late. This is on page 52, paragraph 2, in the English, and on page 123 in the German.

Student: "Another and opposite folly which we meet . . . compelled to remain abstract and indefinite."

[xiv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 47
[xv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 47-48.
[xvi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 48.

LS: What does this mean, in plain English, regarding the rational state? Every state, Hegel contends in quite a few passages in this neighborhood, has its foundation; and that which gives it its true bond is religion. But there are many religions, and what is true of the rational state, then, according to Hegel? Well, can't you do two ordinary operations of subtraction?

Student: That would be the Protestant state.

LS: Yes. The rational state is the Protestant state. It is based on what? The Protestant notion of the conscience, let us say. The independence of the individual conscience of any institutional authority, of anything other than God himself, you could say, is that which makes possible the rational freedom which is the essence of the rational state. What are the practical consequences of that? Such statements are bound to lead to some practical consequences. What about citizenship and so on? What conclusion would you draw from this?

Student: They would be Protestant.

LS: In the first place, only in a Protestant society can there be a rational state. Yes? And secondly, in a Protestant state, say, Prussia at that time, what would follow regarding citizenship?

Student: Catholics would not be citizens.

LS: Yes. Nor any non-Christians either, because Catholics are still closer to Protestant Christians than most people. That is by no means what Hegel thinks, however. I read to you a passage in his *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 270, a long note.

> It is in the nature of the matter that the state fulfill its duty to help the religious community in its religious purpose in every way and to protect it. Nay! Since religion is that moment which integrates the state as far as the depth of the mind is concerned, it must demand from all its members that they belong to a religious community, that is to say *any* religious community, because in so far as this refers to the content of representation, the state is unconcerned politically.[xvii]

Now what does this mean? Representation, *Vorstellung* in German, is always distinguished from thinking. It is a non-thinking, commonsensical way of understanding. Religion does not consist in the element of thought according to Hegel but in the element of the imagination or *Vorstellung*—representation. The state has nothing to do with the content of any profession of faith; it is concerned only that every citizen belong to a religious community, because if a citizen is not a member of a religious community then he lacks that binding element in himself which alone can make him a real citizen. The conclusion which we draw from his remarks that only Protestants can belong is not Hegel's opinion. He goes into some detail here and says that the strong state can be rather

[xvii] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §270R, 295.

liberal in this respect and can disregard details which do not concern it, and can even tolerate congregations, if they are small in number, which even reject the direct duties of the state on religious grounds. He is thinking of Quakers and Baptists and so on. Hegel does not like these people, but he says that a sufficiently powerful state can afford them. He quotes a remark made in the United States Congress when the abolition of slavery was discussed by a deputy from the Southern states—he says "the southern provinces"—who said: "Grant us the negroes and we grant you the Quakers."

In the sequel he defends absolutely the citizenship of the Jews against the view which was then common in Germany. So that is very strange. There is a certain difficulty in Hegel, because on the one hand he would seem to concede by force[5] [of] the emphasis on the importance of religion and significance of the differences of religion that[6] [it] was Protestantism which made possible the rational state—to favor a Protestant establishment and to have some doubt about the citizenship of anyone who was not a Protestant. In fact, he is amazingly liberal. The question is whether this does not lead to a difficulty. How would he have talked himself out of that difficulty? This has very much to do with that problem on which I attached on some earlier occasions and on which I would like to say a few words now, namely, the whole question of Hegel's philosophy of history and of his philosophy as a whole, the question of the absolute time or the absolute moment, the final philosophy, the final social order. You will see how religion comes in if you will be patient.

The end of history. There are no longer any tasks for mankind! There is only infinite repetition. Men live in this stage like gods: they are in perfect possession of wisdom, they no longer have to study, like Hegel's students study Hegel's *Logic*; and in addition they are in perfect possession of justice because they simply obey the laws of the rational state and then they are juster than the most just martyrs for justice, because the martyrs did something less perfectly just than what they do now. Yes? Because it is clear that if you are members of a perfectly just society and fulfill the demands of that state you are perfectly just, whereas the martyr for a given cause of justice which does not embody the whole of justice is not perfectly just.

Now this was really Hegel's claim, and when the first critic arose who can be compared to Hegel—that was Nietzsche—he simply said that one should look at these "gods," look at the professors of Hegelian philosophy; they are not gods, they are[7] [epigones], despicable[8] [epigones].[xviii] Hegel himself had said that the owl of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, begins its flight in the dusk, meaning when the night comes, when decay comes, after the task has been fulfilled, corruption sets in. That is the most obvious difficulty of Hegel—[xix]

—That we must keep in mind before we turn to Locke: that Locke admits of corruption once the final state has come.[xx] The earlier forms of society, say, the Greek *polis*, the medieval empire, whatever you take, became corrupt because they contained in

[xviii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, secs. 8-9.
[xix] The tape was changed at this point.
[xx] Strauss must mean Hegel here.

themselves the seeds of corruption. The imperfection of these orders was the reason why they necessarily became corrupt. This imperfection is expressed by the fact that they had in themselves contradictions. You see this also in Marx. In the final state all contradictions have been reconciled. There are no longer any contradictions, and therefore there are no longer any necessary corruptions. In other words, while every previous social order [became] necessarily corrupted, the present social order does not become corrupt because now we *know*. In former times, societies did not know the law of society, the law of history, and knowledge exerts a radical change. Furthermore, Hegel does not deny the existence of the possibility of corruption, what happened after him, say these[9] [epigones]. But he would also say that coequal with the possibility of corruption of science, say, is the possibility of its recovery after the latter. An enormous effort is required for staying on the level of the finest state at its highest level, that there may be periodic recoveries and periodic losses of that highest level; but this is entirely different from what happened in previous history because there is no longer any need for heroic individuals who fight the established right in the name of a higher right to be born. Now it is only a fight between the corrupted establishment in the name of the non-corrupted establishment. We may say that from now on there is only required a fight against the ordinary crime. That would be co-equal with society; there cannot be a fight in the name of new or higher principles of justice.

Now therefore Hegel can defend himself against this Nietzschean argument very well, but the question is this: Is the political or social order described by Hegel the rational order? In his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel presents the rational order as a constitutional monarchy which is of course not limited by [a] representative assembly but by a kind of assembly of estates combined with a laissez-faire economy. Now this *Philosophy of Right* was attacked by everyone, so to speak. For the conservatives it was much too liberal, and for the liberals it was much too conservative. Today there is not a single individual in the world, I would say without any boast, who would say that Hegel presented in his *Philosophy of Right* the rational state. When Hitler came to power in January 1933, I remember well that one of the cleverest public lawyers said, "Today Hegel died," because Hegel in a way really ruled Germany, and especially Prussia, up to the time of Hitler.[xxi] I mean this notion of government which Hegel had and the rule of intelligence as he called it, which meant the rule of a very well-trained and conscientious civil service, came to an end and now party government took over completely—or popular government of some sort.

The only form in which the Hegelian sort of government survives today is that by a French scholar of Russian origin, [Alexandre Kojève], who wrote probably the best book on Hegel in this generation. Unfortunately it is not available in English.[xxii] He wrote a book called *Introduction to the Study of Hegel*, which is a kind of running commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind*, and for those who can read French it is really

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[xxi] Strauss here refers to Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), who was labeled the "crown jurist of the Third Reich."

[xxii] An English translation of Kojève's book appeared in 1969 under the title *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom (Cornell University Press).

valuable. It is the most valuable one on Hegel of which I know. Now he presents the following solution as that transformation of Hegel which is indispensable, but this would really settle the problem completely. Hegel of course thought of a European state chiefly. He was opposed to[10] nationalism. There is a remark somewhere in his *Aesthetics*[xxiii] to the effect that a war between European states is now completely nonsensical, irrational[xxiv]—and he says this, mind you, in 1828, long before the German wars for unification under Bismarck. He thought of wars only in the form of continental wars, say, America with Europe, and this kind of thing. That was really in 1828. He looked very much ahead, as you can see. Now, anyway, according to this present-day quasi-Hegelian statement, what Hegel groped after was a universal state; I mean a global state which he calls "homogeneous," which is in a way the same as Marx meant by "classless." But the crucial point is Hegelian: no caste system in any way; every soldier wears the baton of the marshal in his knapsack; every position in society is open to everyone according to merit and not according to birth. This is in a way Marxist, but there is one great difference between [Kojève] and Marx, which is that he doesn't dream of a withering away of the state. There will always be a state, i.e., compulsion. And somewhere between the present-day United States and present-day Soviet Russia—meaning more socialism than we have now in the United States and more liberty than you have now in Soviet Russia—is, I believe, what he thinks about.

A case can be made that what Hegel meant is, under the radically changed circumstances of the twentieth century, something like this: abolition of war and poverty and hard work, and within that society the possibility of a genuine philosophy—which means Hegel. That is the closest approximation in our day to what Hegel meant of which I which I know. The question is: What is the bond of that society? Or more precisely, on the basis of Hegel's remarks regarding religion as the bond: What takes the place of religion? Now we have seen that there is a great ambiguity in Hegel already. Why emphasize the fact that the basis of society is religion, and of the rational society the Protestant religion? He also says that the state must demand from all its members adherence to a religious community, but it doesn't make any difference what community that is. Now, what is in the bond of all these men belonging to fetishism and everything else between that and Protestantism as Hegel understood it? Either religion means something, and then religious differences mean a lot, or religion means nothing—and then why should the state demand adherence to any religious community? There is a great ambiguity here already in Hegel. Now I suppose a Hegelian would say the bond of rational society is not religion but reason, and I am sure that is what Hegel means because Hegel understands by religion an inferior form of awareness to philosophy. Still, reason is and can be actual according to Hegel only in institutions: if this is a rational society it will reasonably be actual in these institutions and in a few individuals. Hegel had no delusions that the *Logic* would ever become—I don't say a paperback edition, but a kind of reading for every family all over the globe. In brief, what happens to the mass of men if religion is to be the bond of society? And there is the problem, of course, of the infinite variety of religions.

[xxiii] *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1835).

[xxiv] G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 2:1062.

Student: But it is religion and *reason*.

LS: But what does that mean? I have heard that Sidney Hook used that expression,[xxv] and others have also. But what does it mean? If a scientist is dedicated to his science . . . Well, if you want to, you can speak of it as a religion but it is also misleading. The very question which is implied in our discussions indicates the difficulty that religion becomes ever more vague in meaning. It can eventually mean absolutely everything, and that means absolutely nothing. That is exactly the problem.

Now what can be the bond of society? You have a rational social order—and let us assume anything we want about that—and we have some philosophers or even quite a few of them—of course a tiny part of the population in any society. What gives spiritual satisfaction to the large majority of the people?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No. That is a very difficult chapter in Rousseau. If we take the meaning which it seems to have at first glance, Hegel rejects that. That would be a purely technical question for him as to whether you should have an establishment or not. The crucial point for him regarding citizenship—and that is to say access to all public offices—has nothing to do with belonging to any particular religion, as is made clear in paragraph 270. Yes?

Student: It seemed to me in the case of Rousseau that it wasn't really what we understood by religion, as it was belief in God or something like that.

LS: Oh, Rousseau mentioned belief in God there, but how does it work out in practice? Perhaps you are right, come to think of it, that something like a civil religion would be the thing that Hegel had in mind. He must have had it in mind if the word religion is to mean anything. But try to describe it a bit. You must not forget that the civil religion in Rousseau's sense is really the state religion. Hegel is speaking here of a variety of religions. So the state demands from the individual only that he belong to a religious community of his choice, regardless of what his choice may be. You have therefore a recognition of the principle of religious diversity, whereas Rousseau's thesis seems to be a denial of the principle of diversity. So you have religious diversity granted now; if this is so, religion cannot be the bond of society, yes? Because religion is characterized by diversity, and that which is common to all citizens is not any one religion in particular; it can be any religion. Hegel does not even exclude fetishism or polytheism here. He only says that if there are religions requiring human sacrifice or polygamy, the state would be perfectly free to forbid that—not on religious grounds, but because it contradicts the social order. Yes?

Student: You mentioned that only a few men would be aware of the principles of absolute right, but how could this be possible? Why would these men be listened to in the perfect Hegelian state?

[xxv] Sidney Hook (1902-1989) was an American pragmatist philosopher. Though a man of the Left, he became a fierce critic of Stalin and communism.

LS: In the first place, because they do not owe their position to the popular will, yes? Hegel was not a democrat, nor can these people who are called Hegelians today be called democrats. The government has a root of its own which is not the popular will. That problem remains, but I grant you one thing, that Hegel was thinking very much of an influence of the true philosophy on a large group of people, the educated people. That happened to some extent in Germany in his time and the generation after him. The high school teachers, the clergy, the lawyers, the public officials were influenced to some extent by Hegel. Hegel tried occasionally in one of his smaller writings to give this picture: perfect clarity at the top, whether in Hegel or in one close to him, and then it becomes dimmer and dimmer while you go down, but it is still the same substance all the way down. But that is not sufficient; you have also to see how it looks for the simple people, for the mass of people. Now Hegel still assumes the mass of the people will be religious Christians who go to church—in Prussia, chiefly Protestants, and these people believe the old catechism, and they believe pretty much what the Lutheran songs say. And then their pastor will have been to the university, yes? And at the university he will have gotten some very diluted theologically-acceptable Hegelianism, so he will no longer be the same thing as his predecessor who didn't get that at all. You see? That is easily intelligible. It will be diffused into the society. Most of the members will participate in philosophy only by way of deference to more or less Hegelianized people. But you have to think that if this civilization changes radically, if you can no longer assume that the whole citizen body is predominantly Protestant, then Protestantism will no longer be the bond of society. You know? And then the situation is completely altered. In Hegel's language, how do these people that can partake of reason only via religion still partake of reason when religion is no longer there as the most socially potent force? Think of the simple fact which was pointed out after Hegel by a certain critic: that if the newspaper takes the place of the daily prayer, it empties the society completely. I think there is no provision for that grave problem in Hegel or in anything which today is inspired by Hegel. Yes?

Student: Is there anything[11] [of] this problem of the bond and the establishment of religious toleration in Montesquieu? [In] the discussion of religious toleration and commerce in Montesquieu, he talks about the attitude to religion in England.

LS: There is this very great difference, that the spirit of commerce which replaces the spirit of religion is very clumsy. Yes? Which is also, by the way, Kant's assertion, because commerce unites all people—that was the belief, was it not?—whereas religion is a dividing force. Therefore you can get a tolerant society if the spirit of commerce increases and the spirit of religion decreases. That was something which played a very great role in the eighteenth century. Sure . . . up to Kant and including him. But Hegel, in contradistinction to the eighteenth century, had come to see the immense positive significance of religion. That creates the difficulty. If Hegel had simply been a follower of the eighteenth century, he wouldn't have devoted a moment of his attention to this problem except for purely exegetic reasons. On the contrary, however, Hegel rediscovered for himself, against the Enlightenment, the crucial importance of religion.

What he says about Greek religion is especially remarkable in its empathetic qualities. Yes?

Student: I don't understand how Hegel can admit the possibility of decay. That would seem somehow to admit so much chance or something like chance that it would affect the whole scheme of necessity which went before it.

LS: I believe I said in an earlier meeting that in a way Spengler's famous book, *The Decline of the West*, meant the decline of the human race because the Faustic culture is the catholic, universal, and final culture. You must never forget the crucial Hegelian element in Spengler. In a way, Spengler said that which is only implied in Hegel. I think I am aware of this point, but it leads to one terrible thing: that the history of the world which in its totality is said to be perfectly satisfactory to reason—the overcoming of all contradictions, all tragedies redeemed at the end because all the tragedy was needed for this end—would result in final tragedy because man has made all these infinite efforts unconsciously with a view to the establishment of the perfectly just society, and then when this society had come into being it was the moment of the beginning of decay and absolute degradation of man. The history of the world would be tragic then, and this is absolutely opposed to what Hegel meant. Is this not so? . . . or how do you think Hegel would answer?

Student: Why would that answer . . .

LS: For this reason: I tried to show that from Hegel's point of view there is no necessity for corruption.

Student: My question is: Wouldn't Hegel be compelled to say that there is a necessity of non-corruption?

LS: I see. Yes, I think that is defensible, only it must be understood intelligently, because Hegel allows for the accidental. The necessity of non-corruption would be perfectly compatible with the fact that mankind would have its ups and downs there, that there would be a time when men are fully aware of the virtues of their society and their lives and devote themselves to it, and then there would be a period of tiredness. That happens. A relaxation and relapse. But there would always be for the same reason—because they see the corruption—a recovery. It would be hard to defend Hegel otherwise. I think this qualification does not affect the fundamental thesis, because it is no longer of any serious interest if we know that in each place, when such a corruption has taken place, when such a letdown has taken place, that there is a recovery. Look at it from the theoretical point of view. Hegel's philosophy has been accepted. It is taught by the most respected members of the profession, and they write textbooks and all that sort of thing. They then become necessarily and inevitably worse and worse by virtue of the general acceptance. That is the fate of all human things, and therefore some new fad will emerge that has at least the merit of originality. Why not? But Hegel would say that sooner or later some sensible man who does not teach Hegelianism in a routine way will see the inadequacy of this new system compared with the perfect adequacy of the Hegelian system, and it will be

restored. That is what Hegel would say belongs to the accidental and is of no theoretical interest, and we can take it for granted that it is included in Hegel's scheme. The main point is that there can no longer be a radical and legitimate break. There can perhaps be an illegitimate one, i.e., something done by people out of sheer boredom, out of senseless desire for novelty, but that would eventually break down because there is no longer any positive message which they can bring.

We come to a passage next time where he discusses America. That was for him, in a way, a crucial problem. Here was a new continent, a new society, of which Hegel admits one can know nothing because it belongs to the future; and he says we can't say anything about future societies because we know nothing about them. But does this not make questionable his whole doctrine? This side of the interpretation is taken by Collingwood in his *Idea of History*, where he says that Hegel didn't mean any more than this: that a sensible man can never talk about the future; and therefore Hegel said something trivial by saying that history had come to an end, and for every historian history has to come to an end because he cannot speak about the future but only about the present and [the] past.[xxvi] This is not what Hegel means. Hegel means clearly that America could not have a sensible new principle. That we will read. I do not know if it is in the English edition, but we will come across it in the German. I don't know whether I answered your question or not.

Student: I didn't realize I had asked the wrong question.

LS: Pardon?

Student: You made me realize I had asked the wrong question.

LS: Well, I will give you one minute for raising the right question if it is pertinent.

Student: I think the right question is: Doesn't the philosophy of the absolute moment demand the abolition of the accidental altogether?

LS: No! That Hegel would not admit. For example, what relevance does it have for Hegel's point of view that certain percentages of the population have blond hair or black hair, or, for that matter, blue hair and so on, which is accidental? Yes? That doesn't make any difference. There are accidents. What difference does that make, the color of the hair, for example? As Aristotle in his wisdom had already said, there are differences among men which are politically relevant, such as wisdom, virtue, even wealth or poverty; but whether a man is handsome or not is politically irrelevant.[xxvii] Yes? I think sensible people do not vote for a candidate because of his being handsome. There are many irrelevancies in the world which have their own necessity, i.e., it is essential for a man to be either handsome or not handsome, but it is politically irrelevant; and there are other irrelevancies, and these called by Hegel "accidental," and this accidental is coequal with man. There is nothing wrong with that. Take such things as crime. There will always be

[xxvi] See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 119-20.
[xxvii] Aristotle, *Politics*, book 3, chapters 12-13.

crime according to Hegel, and crimes may shift from one type of crime to another in a given period. When you read the crime statistics and when you read the daily newspapers, you see some shifts of this kind, but Hegel would say that doesn't really make any great difference. Of course, the efforts of the police department must be directed into different avenues, but the main point is, clearly, to find where the crime is and to see what the proper procedure for this kind of crime is—the punishments and so on—and care to prevent conditions which would drive many people into these crimes. But whether this more awful threat checks the crime is not a serious problem in itself, not a theoretic problem.

And there are other problems of this kind. For example, there are differences between the mountainous regions and plains, and this affects the people living in these regions in an early stage; but with the progress of civilization these differences cease to have any fundamental importance and are only variations. The main point is that they are no longer any more than curious variations; there are no longer any fundamental differences. Such states, why should they not survive? In other words, Hegel does not think of an absolute uniformity in every respect. Of course not! Hegel thought, you can say, of uniformity in the most important respects—say, obedience to the laws—but not in unimportant respects. Complete uniformity might even be bad because human originality has something to do with variety.

Student: It seems to me that what you are saying is that the accidental things seem to turn out to be the unimportant things, but the important things are governed by reason through history. Is there any reason for this coincidence between . . .

LS: Oh no, that is essential. The important is the rational and the unimportant is the irrational. To say that everything is rational in every way is absolutely absurd. Hegel never meant that. Hegel believed that he would have done enough if he could show the necessity of the accidental. Yes? In this respect he is not so different from Aristotle. Aristotle's main point regarding chance, as he calls it, is that chance is uncontrollable and therefore utterly irrational, but the necessity for the existence of chance can be understood. More than this cannot reasonably be expected, but this much must be expected. And Hegel then, just as Aristotle in his *Physics*, tries to show why there must be chance.

Student: How would he explain something like the destruction of the Spanish Armada, which was largely destroyed before it ever got to fight the English fleet, and yet was overwhelming, at least materially?

LS: I don't know whether he mentions that fact in his philosophy of history at all, and I might then be in the embarrassing position of making a guess which might be utterly refuted by what Hegel himself says. In my present reading I have not yet come to that part, so I don't know. But let us speculate without any claim to being authentic interpreters of Hegel. I think that Hegel generally says, as Montesquieu before him, that the outcome of an individual battle may depend on accident, but if this battle is really the battle of the war—like the Marathon in the Persian War—then it would not be an

accident but it was "in the cards." There was a superiority of Elizabethan England to Philip's Spain, indicated by such figures as Drake. You see? And he would tell all these stories about these half-pirates, that [they] spelled such vitality of this society; and he would trace it to Protestantism, surely. Not that he would say that such things didn't exist in Catholics, but in this age the world mind was on the Protestant side. The heroic period of Catholicism would be earlier, say, in the Crusades or so. That is an indication of a philosophy of history in Hegel's sense: that accident can never occur in the decisive points. This view is popular today with Marxists. The untruth of it becomes clear if you are in the situation. It is very easy to say that Germany had to lose the Second World War by pointing to the map of resources—oil, iron, and steel—but that was of course nonsense if you think of the situation in '42. If the Russian muszik had refused to fight and Hitler had overrun Russia completely and linked up with Japan later, it is absolutely doubtful whether the Anglo-Saxon powers would have been able to change that state of affairs. I agree with Burke when he says that speculators are much too inclined to minimize the significance of chance.[xxviii] He expressed it more beautifully, but that is what he said, surely. I think one has to take that into consideration. That is, I think, the general objection that one would have to make: that for living man, for acting man, for one who has to make decisions, this kind of doctrine is fundamentally misleading. The Marxists of Soviet Russia would say that even if Soviet Russia is licked, that doesn't mean a thing in the long run because then the problem would come up in the Western world elsewhere—maybe in England, the place that Marx expected in the first place. They are very flexible on this point. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, not for Hegel. What does fundamental importance mean? A fundamental importance for the people concerned! Chance does not affect the fundamental possibilities of man, of course—those which are implied in human nature. If you take, for example, this point which Marxists are likely to bring up: Nazism and Fascism are two forms in which monopoly capitalism tries to protect itself. You must have heard that? Now, if someone says that there may be an element of truth in that, but it misses somehow a decisive point. Look at Hitler's program, look at his obsession with the Jewish question: What does that have to do with monopolistic capitalism? A Marxist would say that this is an accidental thing which has to do with minor matters, and that they are fundamentally the same as Mussolini and Franco. But for the Germans, and especially for the Jews in Germany, this accident was not a marginal thing but decisive in importance.

There is a certain inhumanity in this way of looking at things. Let me say this differently: for us as living beings, individuals in society, chance is of absolutely crucial importance. Take a simple case. A child's mother is saved or not saved by the accident that the physician on the way to her had troubles with his car. Mere accident. But the child's whole life may be decided by this, and yet it was mere accident. So practically for human beings, chance is decisive. Now Aristotle would say that theoretically it is absolutely subordinate to non-chance. Chance cannot be the overriding principle. That is nonsense.

[xxviii] Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 185.

Chance is always within a reasonable whole. But that is not in so far as our acting is concerned, so Hegel tries to equate the two considerations. Yes?

Student: But what about Plato, who considered that the ideas can come in being only through chance?

LS: Sure . . .

Student: It is not a question of whether these people or some other people got the ideas, it was *the* consideration.

LS: Yes. What does that mean? It means that the natural relation of philosophy and society—that is what Plato meant—is so that it does not exclude the possibility of philosophers becoming kings, but it makes it highly improbable. That is, if you please, an analysis of what chance means. They as it were move in different directions, but by some constellation they might be brought to converge. But the inclination of both is to diverge.

Student: Yes, but in Hegelian terms history moves through chance and not through rational action patterns.

LS: No, I would prefer to say that in Hegel history replaces chance, and therefore reason is, as a whole, predominant in practice, and not only in theoretical matters.

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[2] Deleted “this kind”
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Session 6: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —democracy means, then, the sovereignty of the people. People are free in principle to alter or abolish any law they wish. In the earlier parts, there are still some qualifications. A distinction was made between law in general and fundamental law, and the qualification was that the citizens cannot alter the fundamental law. For example, the right of succession in a monarchy is a fundamental law, and the citizens cannot alter this. British federalism was of course against that, against a law making impossible parliamentary changes. So that was one criticism I would make. There are of course other things to criticize in what you said, and quite a few things have to be added to it.[ii]

We are now beginning today the concrete assertions of Hegel, and that will be the subject of the sessions on Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. You have an inkling of them regarding America and Africa, and I urge those of you who have any historical knowledge in any of these fields to bring forth your objections, since I do not know of all of these phenomena of which Hegel speaks. For the Chinese session, I have invited an expert, but for the others we must all contribute our minds.

Now as for the subject today, I think it concerns two main problems which are connected with each other. The first is the old question of the rationality of history. Now in order to establish this assertion, Hegel must delimit history from what is not history. One very important distinction is the one between history and prehistory. This is what we have to take up today. One major objection to the rationality of history is that what people think at different times and different places depends on merely factual differences; for example, arid plateaus or coastal regions. Hegel contends that these two phenomena—the spirit of a nation, and the natural conditions under which it lives—are connected, but not in the way in which the materialistic philosophers would say, namely, that material conditions themselves fully determine the mind, but rather the other way round. More generally stated, Hegel's philosophy of history stands or falls by his philosophy of nature. Of that we have to go into the details later on. But there is an inseparable connection between the thesis that history is rational and that the relation of nature and mind is fundamentally of the character which Hegel ascribes to it.

I think we should first take up a very simple question, and that is the question of prehistory, or the beginning of history. Now, that the beginning of history cannot be the perfect state as described in the Bible or as accepted by traditional theology goes without saying for Hegel. We do not have to develop that. There is only one remark, very clearly expressed, but not in the English translation. Hegel says, defending as it were the biblical notion: "This point is true: mankind cannot have begun with bestial stupidity."[iii] That is true, Hegel says, but he very well could have begun with human stupidity. The word

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 5.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[iii] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 161.

which I translate as stupidity is not very well translated. Does anyone know enough German to translate that? *Dumpfheit*?

Student: Innocence.

LS: Yes, one could almost say that. Bestial humanity is something entirely different from bestiality. In other words, these were all human beings who had not yet exerted their human faculties to any great extent, but man was never a brute. So after this, what is the distinction between history and prehistory?

Student: Well, in the physical sense, you might say he establishes a connection between the sudden emergence of historical facts and the emergence of records.

LS: Absolutely! That must be the beginning. In other words, historical nations are nations which have historical records. The word "history" in English is ambiguous. It is also ambiguous in German, by the way. History means both the facts and the records of facts, and Hegel says this is not an accident; there is some connection between the two. But is this sufficient? He gets into some trouble there.

Student: He suggests the emergence of consciousness, in a sense a feeling that it is necessary, as we approach a rational state with the existence of laws, that people begin to keep records in order to make a coherent whole—that before this it had been unnecessary to record things.

LS: Yes, but what is the factual difficulty here? You mentioned it in your paper. India, yes? These are not strictly speaking historical records, and India is a historical nation.

Student: He of course dismisses India on the basis of . . .

LS: But India is an historical nation, that is clear. Then he speaks of the state, of law, as the dividing line between the historical and the prehistorical. Yes? Now are there not some difficulties regarding Africa, for example? I mean approaching what we know now about the negro tribes, not the modern states like Ghana: Is there something like law there?

Student: Well, he would say that it is not really government; that it is the possession of something like, say, physical power, which could be wrested by anyone who felt that he also had enough power to take it away from him. There is no feeling on the part of the subject that he owes any obligation whatsoever to the chief.

LS: Yes, but certain divine right doctrines in the West are also approximations to that. There are some people around who know something of Africa, but perhaps not in this room . . . Has anyone listened to courses by Mr. Apter,[iv] for example, who has been . . . I have had some conversations with him, and I got the impression that apart from the

[iv] David Apter (1924-2010) was a political scientist who taught for a period at the University of Chicago and studied developing nations in Africa and other places.

modern government of Ghana, there was a clear cut tribal organization with very definite rights and laws there. We don't like them, perhaps, but the mere fact of right and law seems to exist there. But Hegel probably did not talk simple nonsense, so what did he mean by that distinction? How is the line drawn today? What do the present-day anthropologists say? Is the notion of prehistory still in existence? I believe it is. I didn't take the trouble to look up in the Oxford Dictionary to see when the word prehistory came up for the first time—such things are always interesting—but at any rate it is admitted. How is the line drawn today by the anthropologists, or by the historians?

Student: The signs of man, simply.

LS: No, no. Anthropology in the ordinary social sciences, where it means what the Germans call ethnology, the study of the various tribes of man.

Student: I assume it begins with records. Where there are no records history becomes archaeology or anthropology.

LS: What does "records" means here?

Student: Written records.

LS: Written! I see. So in other words, the crucial distinction was really between writing and not writing. Now since the writing of history presupposes, of course, the existence of writing in general, if one enlarges Hegel's view, which then becomes tenable, because this kind of perpetuity which is achieved only by writing does make a fundamental difference. Yes?

Student: It is the preserving of writing, isn't it . . . and the preserving of records? I mean, there may be writings, but they may not be preserved.

LS: But that is not a clear distinction, once you get writing. Does this not alter the condition of man very profoundly?

Student: Well, if heritage is preserved. I mean, if one generation can learn from the preceding . . .

LS: That can be done without writing, obviously. Simply oral traditions offer no difficulty. Of course, then it would require reflections which Hegel did not make. It is not here, as to why writing. Seemingly, one technique among others is so crucially important; and I think one would have to go into that question and link it up with a fundamental concern with man as man, the question of why writing is such a tremendously important invention. That we would require. As Hegel states it, it is indeed not quite satisfactory. The development of language according to Hegel falls entirely in prehistory, a point which he makes very strongly. That implies that language as such is prehistory—not that there were no changes in historical times, Hegel knew that very well, but these changes were only modifications of languages whose origin was prehistorical. You see how

Hegel's philosophy of history is bound up with a philosophy of language. So therefore, if thought is essentially dependent on language, then thought is essentially dependent on something essentially prehistorical; and this is impossible from Hegel's point of view.

But we also have to consider another point which will come up again. Hegel's philosophy of history stands and falls on whether or not there are folk minds, national minds. What does this mean? I mean, does every nation which has a language of its own by this very fact have a national mind in Hegel's sense?

Student: The national mind would seem to be something quite distinct. It involves language of course, but one would find a people with a language and things of this nature before history actually began.

LS: But later, say, in the historical nations, is the difference of languages of any importance for Hegel? Take the French and the Italians, obviously different nations speaking different languages, and also having very striking differences in their arts and their institutions and so on. Is this relevant for Hegel?

Student: I would say that the language is one of those things affected by the movement of the world spirit. He mentions, for example, the contraction of language at the development of the historical phase, so the development of language itself would be influenced or somehow reflect the particular national spirit.

LS: In a way, he almost says that language decays. Compared with the old Germanic, present-day German is very poor; the full sensual tradition is lost.

Student: He would probably suggest that the language enables a people to think of things that perhaps would be impossible to convey by impressions.

LS: But I am thinking now not only of the difference of language, but you have two cultured nations, say, the French and the Spanish; their spirit can be said to be different, but is this of any importance for Hegel, the difference between the Spanish and the French? We come to that later. I don't believe it is. In other words, the historically relevant "folk mind" is not identical with the empirical observable "folk mind." We still have to raise the question of whether the difference between the French and the Spanish reaches to their types. You know? Is not the fact that they are both Catholic nations infinitely more important than any difference between them? So that is another difficulty for the purely empirical approach. I think there is one passage, but it is very long . . . On page 63, paragraph 3; in the German on page 167, paragraph 3. Yes?

Student: About writing . . . you said that if we enlarge Hegel's criterion it makes sense. Did you mean that the distinction is between people that know how to write and those that do not, or people who write about something?

LS: Simply the fact of writing. And of course one has to consider that hieroglyphs are writing. Writing does not mean merely the alphabet, that goes without saying. Yes?

Student: Is it clear that primitive societies did not write?

LS: The term "preliterate people" is constantly being used, so that must be so. Or does preliterate mean something else in anthropology? I may be mistaken. Well, some of you have been through the University of Chicago College where you have been exposed to this kind of thing. No? So what about the Incas? The Incas clearly had law, government, did they not? But what about writing? They did not have writing; they had some signs by which they could send messages, something like the Spartan system, but no writing. Then I think we would have to think through this phenomenon and not merely assume that it is an invention like the invention of the combustion engine but of more importance.[v]

—He can show this, he claims, without presupposing philosophy, but he cannot show in the *Philosophy of History* that history must be rational; he can only show that as a matter of fact it is rational. Now at that time we found a discussion, and in a sense a criticism, of purely empirical history, which can be stated as follows: A purely empirical history is impossible; you must make presuppositions, as they say today, you must have a frame of reference, otherwise the data cannot take on any order. This shows itself in historical research in the following question: What is important and what is unimportant? Every historian has to use that question or he will be a mere collector of data. Now Hegel says that this distinction between the important and the unimportant cannot be left in this somewhat dim condition in which it exists in the common sense, where we know that whether Caesar had more or less hair is unimportant, and whether Caesar defeated the Germans is very important. We have to clarify what we mean by important and unimportant. And Hegel says that ultimately it can only mean what is important for man's humanity. Man's humanity consists in his freedom, which is inseparable from his consciousness, and without this we cannot even begin to understand. Now what do you say?

Student: In order to determine what is important and what is unimportant in any historical period it seems to me that one must first look at the period, so far as he is able, without preconceptions, and then on the second look he will know.

LS: But that is very abstract, not very empirical. How does it work in practice? Everyone before he begins a study has already selected it, I take it.

Student: He has selected his study . . .

LS: Sure, and the decision is implied in that. Hegel says he cannot leave it at that commonsensical procedure, which is for practical purposes excellent but theoretically wholly unsatisfactory, and therefore we have to clarify what is implied in the selection. Now the answer today of course is that every selection presupposes direction of interest and ultimately values, and there is an infinite variety of values, so therefore anything can become interesting.

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[v] The tape was changed at this point.

Student: Well, I wouldn't go along with that at all.

LS: That is too non-commonsensical also. Yes?

Student: It seems to me that your selection is based on a broader knowledge of the period that we are dealing with. The question that you finally choose in a particular field, your monograph, is going to be related to your understanding of what is important in that particular field, not what is important in history as a whole.

LS: But what . . . I am not a Hegelian; I do not defend my own position. But we must try to understand what Hegel means. What do you really mean by that? Disregarding the question of selection for a moment, if that is possible, how do you proceed? You read, say, a historical document . . .

Student: You sort of drift into it, it seems to me.

LS: That is very sound and good for practical purposes, not to get entangled in so-called methodological problems; but the problem is that in every established discipline there is a tradition, and there is also a tradition as to what is to be regarded as important. But that means, philosophically speaking, that one is passing the buck: George has done it; he has established, for example, that economic things are terribly important and that you can't write a history about the Reformation period without considering the tremendous economic changes which went on partially as a result of the discovery of the New World, and so on. But still, a man has to take responsibility even for what has gone on in his discipline without his contribution to it; therefore this question must be coherently faced.

Now we must take a concrete example, because obviously many things which common sense would regard as important are not regarded by Hegel as very important. What would be a good example? I deliberately exclude American examples because America is a very touchy subject here, as you have noticed, and we will take that up later on.

Student: Great loves? Hegel would not consider those very important.

LS: Which one?

Student: You were seeking a subject of history which Hegel would not consider very important. I don't feel that Hegel would consider great loves very important, would you?

LS: I do not hear you.

Student: Great loves. Like Antony and Cleopatra.

LS: Oh! Surely not historically. But then he would say that if Cleopatra had been a barmaid, surely no one would say it was important, but only if she happened to be the queen of Egypt. So then we have to take up the whole question of Egypt, this particular province supplying Rome with both grain and goods in the Roman Empire, yes? So then

we come already to this broad problem of Greekness in its decayed stage and Rome-ness. That is interesting. And that it appeared in the form of a woman, Hegel would say it is quite interesting, and Rome in the form of a man; but he wouldn't regard this as absolutely crucial, because an Egyptian king might have done fundamentally the same thing, although not via love—in other ways. You know? No, that would not be a good example, I would say. But something like the things to which he alludes when he speaks of the changes which are crisscrossed and which are underlyingly meaningless on a larger scale, say, for example, an attempt to restore something which was hopeless from the very beginning and which might have created much uproar and much bloodshed and was the talk of the century, and yet ultimately it was only a retarding thing. I do not know at the moment of an example.

Student: The battle of Agincourt, the vain English attempt to recapture France with the spectacular use of artillery.

LS: Yes. I think Hegel would say that we have to go back to the root of the matter, that of the feudal order, the claim of the Kind of England to control France on the basis of feudal law and the assertion of national unity against it. That is the broad context. The particular things that happened were due to special situations, to special heroism on the part of one particular king, and this is uninteresting ultimately. Let me state it more generally. The difference between the philosophic historian and the non-philosophic historian, Hegel says, is that for the non-philosophic historian everything is important; everything that is important for thoughtful contemporaries and for thoughtful fellow citizens of the actors. For the philosophic historian only that is important which is important for man as man. Terrific slaughters of millions of people in China, for example, would not be as such interesting to man as man, whereas the Chinese patriarchic theocracy, as he calls it, is important because this is in us. If we are going to analyze our political thought, we would come across the problem of family and state, family and civil society, and this implies the possibility that civil society takes on the form of a big family. This possibility was actualized according to Hegel in China, and therefore China as China stands for something in us. More generally stated: in man as man. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, well you can frequently illustrate—frequently, not in all cases—what Hegel means by looking at it the way a Marxist would look at it, because in certain points they agree. Within certain limits Marxism is Hegelianism turned upside down, as Marx describes it. Yes?

Student: Is the presentation that history is rational different from the presentation that it must be rational in Hegel's own understanding, as it is in the two presentations? Are the two separated in Hegel's own understanding or only in his presentation?

LS: I see what you mean: Hegel giving these lectures in the philosophy of history could not possibly forget what he believed he knew and what he had said in his *Logic*. But on the other hand, he makes it quite clear that what is true of Hegel is not true of Hegel's

audience. Hegel's audience consisted of quite a few people who had not studied Hegel's *Logic* and did not know whether the *Logic* was true or not. But Hegel said that even they can see from this lecture that history is rational. They cannot see more than that; they cannot see that history *must* be rational. But Hegel always uses, of course, the results of his *Logic* and of his philosophy as a whole. That's clear, and about that he has perfect clarity. When he refers to a certain thing regarding his philosophy of nature, for example, he would say that what he says here is merely historical—I will explain this immediately after—and a mere report; and you cannot understand a philosophic thesis from a mere report, you can only take cognizance of it. To see its truth you have to study the philosophy of nature. You see? It is not a serious problem. The question is, Hegel would say, that the historian cannot work without insight into what is important for man as man; and what is important for man as man is freedom and consciousness of freedom. This Hegel believes he can show without too great difficulty, and this is all that is required for the philosophy of history.

Student: Can't there be anything else that can be important? Can't you deny that freedom and consciousness . . .

LS: You may deny it, but the question is how good the denial is. I mean, what could you say to refute this? Would you say that the most important thing is that all men have three square meals a day, as an alternative?

Student: Well, starting from Hegel's own beginning, that we begin to study history with our own presuppositions at hand, that is, with our own values . . .

LS: Okay. The question concerns these values. What are your values?

Student: Well, once you determine what is important and what you think is important, this is what you apply to history. You do the generalizing.

LS: That is what empirically happens, without any question, but what Hegel says is that you cannot leave it as Gunnar [Myrdal] did—he is a very well-known sociologist who wrote a book on the *American Dilemma*.[vi] He begins his book roughly like this: Decencies are my values, but the following study is strictly scientific and is in no way affected by my values. In history they don't do this kind of thing.

Student: Well, I would hold that it is impossible to do it.

LS: Well, sure, but the sociologists believe that you can just leave it at a declaration of your values and everything else is strictly scientific. That is so. You can believe me because I have read this so often. Now Hegel would say, of course, that this is nonsense. I mean, no one is entitled to say simply: That is my opinion. That is in no way respectable. You can set forth opinions in a merely scientific book, but you have to give your reasons for these opinions and examine them. And Hegel would say that if you do that—for

[vi] Gunnar Myrdal (1898-1987) was a Swedish economist and sociologist. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy* was published in 1944.

example, if you take the rough standard of the Declaration of Independence as now understood by liberals, which I believe is a very common case in the social sciences—Hegel would say that there is much truth in that, and to some extent it agrees with his own: that the recognition of the rights of man is inseparable from the awareness that man as man must have and deserves these rights. That is really the sense of history and the meaning of history. If I analyze it without having this somehow in mind, I cannot possibly analyze even a negro tribe in Africa. When I read of the practices of cannibalism, I don't have to express my disgust; that is a matter of style and, as such, uninteresting. But I cannot help thinking it is a terrible thing, and Hegel says one cannot leave it at this merely private opinion. That is perhaps a nice elegance of style, but in seriousness one cannot do that.

Student: Well, then, if you deny the philosophy of logic, then you deny Hegel for good reasons, if good reasons are possible. I don't know.

LS: Yes, that is always a question.

Student: Then Hegel is no longer "absolute"?

LS: Yes. I mean, perhaps there [are] philosophical alternatives to Hegel, but you yourself said that if some sociologists followed this practice—this "I believe in these values, but my study is, however, one hundred percent scientific," so that someone who had wiser premises could have written the same book—then either you have to abandon objectivity altogether, and that is the end of historical science, or you have to say that perhaps there is objectivity in the value[s], and then you must think more about these so-called values. This is more difficult than merely empirical studies. People quite excusably shy away from this.

Student: But it seems to me that you think of history as an absolute science. There are degrees and degrees, and you don't have to[1] [claim] that history is an absolute science like physics or mathematics; we could think of history not as an absolute science but as . . .

LS: Yes, but the question is not whether history can be a science like mathematics, but the simple notion of objectivity. I was not speaking of exactness but of objectivity, which I believe is essential to history.

Student: Well, but it need not be as objective as some other things. I mean, you can use the word objective in the relative sense too.

LS: Yes, but then . . . Oh gosh. Sure, you can do that but then you sanctify confusion. Obviously, if you say you speak of objectivity but that it doesn't mean objectivity here, that doesn't work!

Student: But there are so few things that are objective in science. I mean, mathematics is an objective science, but . . .

LS: Yes, but then one has to go into the very complicated reflections on the character of history and what objectivity really means. For practical purposes, what you say is okay, but as men of science we cannot always leave it at common sense. Yes? I mean, to advise a student about his doctor's thesis is a practical procedure which should proceed along commonsense lines, but the whole science itself cannot be of such a nature. I know that this very charming thoughtlessness is today consecrated by practice, but it is not good. What is really the difference between a partisan statement of either the desegregationists or segregationists and a historical work? Common sense assumes there is a difference between the two, but you seem to say there is only a difference of degree.

Student: Well, when you approach each man as to how he uses his material, it does come in the end to a matter of agreement with his use of his material—that is, how he handles his subject.

LS: Well, we cannot solve that question now. It is much too long, and perhaps we could not solve it if we had much more time, but it [is] to the obvious advantage of Hegel that he sought at least to face that problem. Would we agree at least to that point?

Student: Yes.

LS: Yes?

Student: I still don't understand how the assertion that history is rational can be understood apart from the assertion that it *must* be rational. If one understood red instead of rational, can one understand "is red" apart from "must be red"?

LS: All right. Something like that we will have to take up. I will now take up another problem, and at the end you will tell me whether you are satisfied. Yes? Good. I will state the question as follows: What is the alternative to a philosophy of history? Let us assume that this is our problem. Now in the pre-Hegelian world, it was this: there is an eternal truth which is in principle always accessible to man. The classic presentation of this is of course Plato, who says that there are eternal ideas which are in principle equally accessible to man as man, and only accidentally are there differences. What in fact happens or in fact is known depends on accident or on chance. Hegel faces this in the passage which we just read, where we left off on page 65.

Student: "Of the difficulties stated . . . have a brain in its head, and a heart in its breast."[vii]

LS: Now what does Hegel say? Hegel states it here in this way. The problem of the accidental or the chance-like thing: he says that it exists also in natural phenomena. For example, there are, as we all know, children born with two heads—at least we read that from time to time—or with four fingers, or God knows what. What does this mean? Now in natural history, as he says, the accidental finds its sphere within the essential. We

[vii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 65.

understand these strange and abnormal phenomena as deviations from the normal. This is of course the crucial point. The normal is the essential, and Hegel contends that this is true also of history: there is the essential in history as history, there are not merely a chain of accidents. That is Hegel's great challenge to Plato and Aristotle and quite a few others. There is an essential in history as history, and it is not merely a chain of accidents. Hegel takes up another argument in the immediate sequel. Let us read only the beginning because it takes about seven pages, and we cannot read it all.

Student: "A similar process of reasoning—"[viii]

LS: No, no, that is not in the German. In the German it says, "One proceeds in a similar way [namely, those who deny the essential because of the freak—LS] if one says, correctly, that genius, talent, moral virtues, sentiment, and piety, can happen under all those constitutional and political conditions."[ix] Now that is a more relevant point; I will try to explain it. There are things which are everywhere and always the same—the Platonic-Aristotelian view—and they are the essentials: moral virtue, genius, talent, and so on. Man has an essential constitution which never changes, and this is the essence; history is the mere[ly] accidental. Hegel says that these things that are always and everywhere the same are only the formal, by which he means the external. That men are thinking beings is true, but what they in fact think differs from epoch to epoch, and this difference between the epochs is not an accidental difference. Surely we find morality, philosophy, in a sense, everywhere, but what is everywhere the same is the least interesting. The interesting is the essential difference.

Now let us link this up with the question of the alternative to Hegel's philosophy of history, which is that there is no rationality of history. What does this mean today? If I understand today's historians correctly, there are *n* different cultures—say, twenty-five; some say thirty-seven, but this is a purely empirical question—[and there is] no progress because progress would presuppose a universal and absolute standard. For these people, liberal democracy is in fact the standard, by which is meant such things as equality of the sexes, no cannibalism. We don't have to go into the details regarding elections; the very term "underdeveloped country" is an extremely polite but perfectly clear value judgment. Furthermore, there is no absolute of any one culture, even our own, but the understanding of all cultures is an absolute. This is the standpoint of objectivity or science. But since there is an essential relation between our culture and the existence of this objective approach, we imply that all other cultures are relative—surely, because they lack that objectivity.

What does this mean, however, if we try to think about it? These other cultures and their beliefs are not simple nonsense, but what they believe is only partly true. Therefore the question arises as to what part of the truth does this or that culture miss, and we order them in this way. In other words, instead of a philosophy of history Hegelian style, which is necessarily a history of progress, we get a typology of culture. That is the inevitable alternative to Hegel. For example, I have been told—I have read very little about it, but

[viii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 65.
[ix] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 169-70.

here in this building one cannot help hearing about it—that there are guilt cultures and shame cultures.[x] Have you heard that? For example, the Jewish-Christian tradition is clearly a guilt culture, and the Japanese are shame-cultured. You understand the difference? The implication of these men is that somehow shame culture is[2] [less] reasonable than guilt culture. That is clear, whether they say it or not. However this may be, the alternative to Hegel is the typology of cultures, we can say, and then of course you don't have to speak of progress, but you have the progress implied in the claims you cannot help raising regarding your analysis of cultures, your anthropology, your history. Now generally speaking, one can say that the typology of culture is closer in this respect to classical thought than Hegel. If you study Herodotus, for example, you can see that Herodotus . . . that, for example, Egypt presents this particular possibility, Persia that particular possibility, and could arrange other cultures accordingly, without any claim that one precedes essentially and factually the other. That is indeed the question. Does this answer your question or not? I don't claim that it did. I really wonder.

Student: No, it didn't.

LS: Well, restate it then.

Student: Well, if I may ask another question, what would be the equivalent of . . . for Hegel, that Kepler had?

LS: I said it! It was extremely simple: that what is important for man as man is his being free and his knowing of his freedom. That man as man is free, which means that no man can ever be a slave defensibly, which has infinite consequences. That is it. Hegel does not presuppose that you accept his philosophy of right as a whole; that is a longer question. But on the other hand, Hegel would say that a man who believes in freedom without seeing that there must be a government with an inherent right and sanction of its own is talking nonsense. You know Hegel is not an anarchist. What Hegel says presupposes something which he could say, what we today in fact all grant—whether rightly or wrongly, it doesn't matter, but what is implied in modern society: that there cannot be any inequality except that due to achievement, i.e., service; and on the other hand, in the decisive respect all men are equal but from this equality of men it does not follow that all men equally participate in government. This is admitted even by modern democracy as distinguished from Hegel's constitutional monarchy because, as President Eisenhower said when he made a distinction between them: "Civil service is a privilege and not a right."[xi] That means that the egalitarianism of modern society is only part of it; the equally important part is the other, the government part, however differently we understand this now from the way Hegel understood it.

Student: Well, I have difficulty in keeping the necessity and the rationality separated . . .

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[x] The anthropologist Ruth Benedict used this distinction to describe the difference between American and Japanese culture in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946).

[xi] President Eisenhower, Statue of the Union Address, 2 February 1953.

LS: No. Rationality is understood by Hegel in the substantive sense rather than the formal sense. Rationality means sensible; it is intrinsically sense regarding both ends and means, and not merely the means. What Hegel says in his *Philosophy of History* is this: the historical process is one which necessarily leads up to rational society, not regarding means merely, but regarding its essential character. The final society is one in which the true principles of society are recognized, and the true principles can be expressed by the formula "freedom"—which needs, obviously, some very important specifications which in a very general way we all understand.

Student: Would he be opposed to . . .

LS: No. I think he would say that it is scientific, except in one crucial point: the necessity—I can only repeat what I said before—of the historical process being rational is not shown here, only the fact that it has been rational. That he claims to show, not merely to persuade.

Student: And one can understand the fact without understanding the necessity?

LS: Yes, surely, and many other things too. Does anyone have a good example of a fact which can be proved? . . . I mean not merely sensibly, but . . . This fact, that you can know that a man dies without knowing why he died, that is not a good example here. A more pertinent thing?

Student: You can see that a man has a good state without knowing his biography.

LS: And without knowing about the institutions which made that possible—and the traditions.

Student: I don't how pertinent it is, but what about the problem of family and kiddies in ancient Greece? It was a necessary problem; it couldn't be avoided.

LS: Yes. That you can prove a fact without seeing the reason is really trivial, I would think.

Student: But when you say that the fact is rationality . . .

LS: Yes, even there. Let us assume that Hegel would say that the Napoleonic empire and his principles as far as the Code Civil, for example, were the rational principles. Hegel would say that he could prove that without going into the question of whether such an empire had to become actual at some time. It is kin to the old question of proving a fact and then ascending to the cause, or descending from the cause to the bare facts: "the facts and the whys," as Aristotle calls them. It is not a very important question, however.

Now let us first take up some other passages in this neighborhood. On page 69 in the English, and page 174 in the German; the second half of the paragraph on page 69.

Student: "If in the development of the state . . . principles from the ruin to which they had been brought."[xii]

LS: Yes. This passage is of some interest, although it is not in itself conclusive regarding a great question which we discussed last time: the end of history. Must not corruption necessarily follow the completion? What Hegel seems to have thought is this: No, corruption follows completion in all earlier stages because of the imperfection of the orders then established, but once you have the good order there is no necessity for corruption. There is nothing rational opposing the good order as there was something rational opposing, say, the *polis*. There are some other passages on this subject to which we may turn later. I wonder whether the most important is not that regarding America; but we must prepare that. Let us first take page 85 bottom, page 207 in the German.

Student: "As to the political condition of North America . . . satisfy its necessities in the way in which it is accustomed so to do so."[xiii]

LS: And America has not yet reached that stage. You see here in passing what Hegel regarded as a matter of course to be an element of the perfect order. Yes? An organization of the valid, which means that it consists of classes. The term used by Hegel is not classes, but *Stände*, which is not quite the same as classes but which comes from the old expression "estate," which no longer had the rigid feudal meaning. It is still used colloquially in German to mean profession, only with a somewhat more dignified sense. At any rate, it is not merely classes, because they are not defined by merely their position in the process of production but by their function in society as a whole. But let us go on in page 86, the next paragraph.

Student: "America is therefore the land of the future . . . our concern must be with that which has been and that which is."

LS: That will be all I need for the moment. Now this is, I would assume, the key passage for Collingwood's interpretation of the *Philosophy of History*: that Hegel's view that history ends with the present does not mean that the present is perfect but that the future by its nature is unknowable, and Hegel really thought of an infinite progress.[xiv] This is, as for the substantive assertion, in flagrant contradiction to the doctrines of, for example, [Tocqueville][xv], who said that America had an entirely novel principle from the very beginning. But we can't go into that question now. What Hegel himself says, however, makes it clear that the Collingwood interpretation is absolutely wrong. Unfortunately, this is not in a passage occurring in the English translation. I will translate it. On page 212 in the German: "Totality consists in the union of the three principles, whatever they may be. This is the case in Europe, in which the continent of the mind is united with itself."[xvi] In other words, Europe is a completion—Europe of the nineteenth century, that

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[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 69.
[xiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 85-86.
[xiv] Again, see Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 119-20.
[xv] The transcript has ellipses here.
[xvi] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 212.

is. For America there only remains the principle of not being completed and never being completed, which is to say something not new and not substantively making a contribution. So there is no question as to whether or not Hegel believed that the future history of the world, especially the development in America, would be a fundamental change. This does not mean that for Hegel America was not very important; he took quite a bit of interest in it, but he thought that America had the chance of developing fully and more easily the already-discovered final principle, the final principle being that of freedom. So there is no argument against that here. There are other passages on this subject which we cannot take up because it would take too much time.

Now let us turn to the other great problem which Hegel takes up in this section and which I stated at the beginning of this session: that apparently the national character depends on the climate and other natural things. Hegel says that if climate would explain Homer, there would be other Homers now under Turkish rule, so climate is not of decisive importance. There is an importance of nature, but it can only be understood as a directedness of nature toward the mind. But he has to show this in concrete. The principle is this: the merely natural things are in themselves meaningless. They lack human meaning, and Hegel tries to show that the meaningless takes on meaning when meeting with the meaningful. We cannot understand the meaning of land and sea, for example, by merely looking at it physically, chemically, and so on; but once we see it in the human context, this distinction proves to be meaningful. Now, for example . . . perhaps we can take page 80 in the English, and page 189 in the German. We can't read the whole, just the part about the climate.

Student: "In the extreme zones man cannot come to free movement…features contrasted with each other."[xvii]

LS: Now let us stop there. What does he mean? Men begin, of course, as men: they were never brutes; they were men who had not yet exercised their reason. So man lives on the merely natural level, in Hegel's language, so he is therefore absolutely dependent on nature. In such a condition, his mind cannot develop if nature is not of such a character as to favor the development of the mind. This is therefore the moderate zone. Later on, when man has developed, the importance of the natural condition recedes. Civilized men can now live in Alaska and other places of this kind, but the fact that man's development is one from potentiality to actuality, from non-actuality of reason to actuality of reason, means it is a development from complete dependence on nature to almost complete independence from nature. From this point of view, the distinction between zones is of a crucial importance for the understanding of the beginning of human history.

But Hegel is much more interested in another difference, which he develops on pages 88 to 91 in the English, and in the German from 192 to 198, and that is the difference between land and sea. He divides the land into three parts: the arid element; valleys with rivers; and the coastal regions. The main point is this. Civilization begins in valleys with rivers . . . as is today, I think, still admitted, yes? I mean there is a crucial difference between Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China, and northern India as compared with any

[xvii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 80.

earlier cultures which is connected with this fact. But what does this mean? Hegel puts it in a broader context by saying that the arid elements are the least satisfactory; valleys and rivers are the origins of civilization, but the coastal regions are the most conducive to the development of civilized men. This, then, had to do with the fundamental difference between land and sea. Of course, on the sea there cannot be civilization, but the closeness to the sea is the most favorable condition for the development of the mind. The sea and the water unite, mountains divide: that is the thesis that goes through the book. Hegel here opposes the thesis of the French in the Revolution that rivers are natural frontiers—you know, the Rhine frontiers and that sort of thing. Hegel says here that this is not true—I am sure this is without any practical political consequences; rivers or seas unite men. This is a dialectical fact, that the uninhabitable, that which is completely unable to be lived in by man, should unite man. He makes a few points which we might look up on page 90 in the English, page 197 in the German.

Student: "The sea gives us the idea of the indefinite—"[xviii]

LS: In other words, you find a similar dialectic in man's navigation: that gain and the opposite of man's concern with gain—exposing one's life—go essentially together.

Student: "Courage is necessarily introduced into trade . . . they have no positive relation to it."[xix]

LS: . . . up to this point. You see in the first place that the merely prosaic and low concern with gain is essentially connected with courage in the case of navigation; and secondly, and which is only another way of saying the same thing, that bravery is essentially connected here with understanding, the greatest ruse, or resourcefulness, whereas other forms of courage do not require that, essentially. You see here that this is Hegel's way of treating the natural conditions of history and how they are meaningful. Now here he takes up, in his way, the reflections of the Greeks. That was an old story. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, sure, that is true, but let us first take up the famous symbols which the Greeks created in order to indicate a similar thought. Well, who is the wise man in Greek mythology? The traveler—on the sea! Of course. And there are other things regarding the ocean, in Homer as well as elsewhere, as both the principle of everything and, at the same time, that element by which man is led to the principle of everything by being made more thinking and therefore more able to understand the principle and many other things. That is quite true, and there are those famous passages in Plato, especially in the *Laws*, against the overemphasis on the sea. But what was the situation in Greece, by the way? In Athens, regarding this sea and land business, what were the political implications?

Student: Conquest?

[xviii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 90.
[xix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 90-91.

LS: No, no. Very concretely? Practical politics? Who was in favor of the sea, and who was against it?

Student: The landed aristocracy was against it.

LS: Yes! The democracy was naval. I mean, the Periclean democracy was understood as a naval empire. And in practical terms, the democracy meant that the poorest classes of the population, who could not harm themselves at all, were used as rowers and acquired citizen rights. This is a very simple connection between a democracy and the existence of a navy. So the conservative people were against the navy. Plato makes this very clear in the *Laws*, and Aristotle too. And there is one thing that you must not overlook: that it is only that the cities should not be too close to the sea; there must be a coast somewhere, and of course there must be some possibility of using the coast for navigation.

Student: I implied a somewhat more moderated view, and that also the sea seems to have preference from the theoretical point of view. You know the theory in which the arts . . .

LS: No, no; even politically . . .

Student: I mean to the extent to which the arts, for example, have a political relevance.

LS: No. On the most empirical level, the Platonic city as described in the *Laws*, the city on an island which has of course access to the sea and is not merely land-bound—that one must not underestimate. Surely there is a difference, and the difference is connected with the difference between Plato and Hegel regarding commerce. Hegel accepted a fundamental commercial society. Plato did not.

Student: And I should think also all the things that change supplies . . .

LS: Oh no, I don't want to deny the difference, but still, inland China is not especially the place of which Plato thought. Now Hegel of course also tries to give meaning to the merely factual distinction between the New World and the Old. From a European perspective, the world which was unknown to the Europeans up to that time was the New World. Hegel says, however, that this is intrinsically—[xx]

—also that the newness of the New World shows itself especially in the smallness of the animals in the New World compared with those of the old one. I do not know whether he is right. I am told he is wrong regarding the crocodiles of the Amazon River, and regarding bears—I really don't know whether that is true. How do North American bears compare with Siberian bears?

Student: Mr. Anastaplo suggested that crocodiles could have swam across; so Hegel might be saved in this respect.

[xx] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: I see. A kind of immigrant. Yes, that might be, for all I know. And he says that European cattle are said to be more tasty than American cattle. I do not know whether this is true; and certainly if it is true, it should never be said in Chicago.

Now what about some other points? There are some other points that we should consider. What about the African principle? That is a very long statement; it is much more detailed in the German than in the English translation. Well, for Hegel, Africa is simply the state of nature in his sense, which means that state in which man has not really actualized in any degree his humanity. Now what is the complete formula which he uses? The trouble is that these things are all omitted in the English, the most interesting remarks.

Student: This is the land of childhood.

LS: Yes, but that is rather too general. What does it mean? For example, at the beginning of the section on Asia he says, in the German, that with the negroes the natural will of the individual is not yet negated.[xxi] That is one of the most general formulations. Let me see if I can find another one. Yes?

Student: Here, for instance, he says: "In negro life, the characteristic point is that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence."[xxii]

LS: Yes! That is the crucial formula. In other words, for the negro, man is the highest. That is very often misunderstood. What does this mean? It means that there is nothing higher than man. Still more precisely, there is nothing higher than the subjective will; there does not yet exist an objectivity, as Hegel calls it, to which the individual subjects himself. And the proof he gives is drawn from the fetish system: the fetish seems to be a superhuman power but in fact it is completely controlled by man, and in fact it is not an objective power. The passages are in the English on page 93, second paragraph. That is very long. And he says that religion is simply magic or sorcery; and that means, of course, complete control of anything which could be called gods by men, and therefore the absolutism of the individual man. Perhaps we should look at paragraph two on page 95. Will you read that please?

Student: "But from the fact that man is regarded as the highest . . . sinks down to a mere thing."[xxiii]

LS: In other words, human consciousness of freedom presupposes the recognition of objectivity: the recognition of something universally valid, which does not have to be understood as universally valid but to which man bows and without which man cannot have dignity. The rule of the mere subjective will is a sign of absolute barbarism, and Hegel places that barbarism in Africa and shows that in all other cultures, beginning with China, such an objectivity is recognized in varying degrees of clarity. For example, that

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[xxi] Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 234.
[xxii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 93.
[xxiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 95-96.

the Orient is generally speaking inferior to the Roman or Greek world and that, again, is inferior to the Christian world. But Africa is Hegel's mode of the state of nature, the state of nature which is of course much more concrete than it was with Hobbes. I mean, Hobbes did not develop this crucial . . . Although the fundamental thought is the same in Hobbes: the rule of the will of the individual, without any limitation. This is clearly already what Hegel had in common with Hobbes. Well, I know much too little about Africa, hardly anything, so I cannot say to what extent it is true or whether it is fair. Hegel would of course say that the bestialities which he describes here occur in other countries, but they are uninteresting because in these other cultures or countries there are also qualifying factors, limiting factors. The question is whether there[3] [are] not some qualifying factors also in Africa.

Student: Wouldn't the fact that only under certain circumstances are such bestialities indulged in Africa be a qualifying factor? I mean, he mentions that only in certain circumstances, such as the death of a king, do such things occur, and that there are certain ritual meanings to the Africans in this.

LS: In other words, there is some limit. You can't do everything as you please. There is some custom and some law, surely. That is quite true, but Hegel would say that this kind of custom, or law, or whatever it may be, is so that its principle is contempt for mankind, which expresses itself in cannibalism. Cannibalism would perhaps be the clearest example, because none of the other cultures that he discusses later have cannibalism. Don't forget that! Neither China, nor India, nor any of the others. And from this point of view he tries to understand the whole thing. And then he would say: What about religion? Don't they have religion? And he would say that this is not religion because the powers which they recognize are understood to be controlled by them. Hegel also knows that this happens in the highest religions, but there it happens against the meaning of the religion, whereas in Africa it *is* the meaning. If someone should ask about some Siberian things, Hegel would say that what is true of the torrid zone is not affected if it also happens at the other extreme. What he would do with the Aztecs, I do not know. They also had cannibalism, you know; that played a very great role in their culture. Or am I mistaken? Is it not true that neither in China, nor in India, nor in old Persia existed cannibalism? The sacrificing of human beings as it existed in some of these Canaanite tribes is something different from eating of the flesh. Hegel would perhaps say that it is perfectly[4] [true] that this state of affairs existed in other parts of the globe prior to the development of any culture, but the characteristic thing is that it lasted so long in a large society only in Africa, and he is therefore entitled to locate it in Africa. It is a pity that no one here has experience of Africa. Hegel of course gave an answer to the very general question that there can be examples of very fine character—generosity, and gratitude, and all this kind of thing—by saying that this can exist anywhere, just as passion and memory and some form of technical reasoning exist everywhere. But it doesn't mean much. If someone would say: Now what precisely was the great discovery made in our century regarding Africa?—what was it? There was a big cult regarding things African after the First World War, if I remember well, perhaps connected somehow with Expressionism. Am I correct?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes. Now what was the reasoning? . . . I have not the slightest idea.

Student: The expression of the subconscious mind without . . .

LS: Oh, I see. Now Hegel would say: Sure, that's it! You know the subconscious mind is the completely uncalculated mind. That is interesting. It confirms Hegel rather than refutes him. If, for example, some people are charmed by jazz, he would not deny the charm, but you cannot separate that from the other implications—if jazz is really African, which I don't know. You have to consider it in all its implications for the most important things, and you cannot leave it at just singling out the one element which happens to please you.

There are some questions of great importance which we have to take up next time, especially that certain passage in which Hegel explains what he means by potentiality. Is there anything which you would like to take up before we adjourn? I'm willing to have a short discussion—maybe five minutes, no longer.

Student: I don't know whether this can be covered in such a short time, but he talks again about the church and state to some extent in the last two pages.

LS: The last section of the introduction, especially in the German version, is a wonderful summary of the whole argument of the book, and surely the question of church and state will come in, but we will discuss this when we come to China and India. Hegel thought that China—and that is, allegedly, absolutely wrong—that China belongs together with Mongolia, as he calls it. He doesn't mean that Outer Mongolia where Mr. Molotov is now accredited;[xxiv] he had somewhat different ideas of Mongolia. At any rate, he believed that the reigns of the Dalai Lama are the . . . to the Chinese regime. Now both are theocracies in his opinion, but . . .

[1] Deleted "deny"
[2] Deleted "more"
[3] Deleted "is"
[4] Deleted "possible"

[xxiv] Vyacheslav Molotov, who had been Foreign Minister in the Soviet Union from 1939 to 1949 and from 1953 to 1956, was made Ambassador to Outer Mongolia in 1957.

Session 7: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —For most of the hearers it was very hard to understand because you did not use sufficiently concrete examples.[ii] We will take that up later, but fundamentally, of course, your report was correct and clear. I think it is better to wait with our criticism of Hegel, via Mr. . . ., until we have tried to clarify the point.

Now I was struck in reading this section by one very obvious and simple thing which one could call Hegel's simple moralism. When he looks at the Indians and Chinese he is struck by the absence of probity. Whether this is empirically true or not is something we will take up later, but it is important for the understanding of Hegel. After all, we are not concerned here primarily with India and China, but with Hegel; and for Hegel the principle of honesty is of crucial importance, and he finds this most fully developed in the West. Hegel doesn't deny that there are crooks in the West, but they are recognized as crooks because of this principle of honesty which is the essence of human conduct, and in India and China that does not yet exist. He does not deny, however, that there are some very noble characters there. He emphasizes that.

Student: And some he censors.

LS: Yes . . . or their sayings, or what have you. But the main point for him is that in these societies, as societies, there is not a place—and he contends there cannot be a place— for principles of decency. Yes? Now what are the rules of that, as Hegel considered it? We must look back at Africa as he describes it, and we find that Africa is characterized by the thesis that man is the highest, which means that the individual subjective will is the highest. That is the state of nature as Hegel understands it. There is not yet in evidence something to which men must bow. This is the first step. Now this step is taken in China and India, but it is of utmost importance how "that to which men must bow" is understood, and it is not adequately understood in the Orient and especially in India and China. The true understanding would be to know "that to which men must bow" to be mind, and to be mind which is in itself articulated—for which Hegel takes the Christian formula of the Trinity, which is not literally identical with what he means. According to Hegel there is an essential connection between the understanding of the absolute—that to which men must bow—as mind, and the realization that it is of the essence of man as man to be free. Therefore freedom, in the sense of political freedom also, and the understanding of the absolute as mind belong together. He measures, therefore, the despotism of the East, either in the Chinese or Hindu form, as the reflection of a fundamentally inadequate understanding of the absolute. We must now try to understand this more specifically, and we will take up China first.

He begins to speak of the character of the Oriental world in general, and he finds that an independent substantial power is recognized there. Man is man according to the Orientals by being with a view to that power, whereas for the Africans man is man by being a

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 6.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

particular species of animal. The Chinese and Hindus know that man is not truly man if he is not with a view to that power, yet this substance is not conceived of as mind, which means that no distinction has been made between mind and nature. The human reflection of that is that the government is the master, and in China the most natural form of the master is the father. There is no recognition, therefore, of the subjective will, only external commands addressed by the government to the governed. And furthermore, there is no distinction between mind and nature, between the inner and the outer, and therefore no distinction between the spiritual and the temporal; and therefore the government is essentially theocratic, which means that the world ruler is a god and that god is a worldly ruler.

Now the phenomenon from which Hegel starts, of course, is the crucial importance of the family in China: the principle is the family. This means that since the whole society is understood as a family, all members of society with the exception of the emperor are children, and they have no possibility of an independent will. There is therefore no possibility of a distinction between the legal and the moral. In a Western society it is understood that there are different kinds of commands: commands the fulfillment of which can be enforced—legal ones—and others which cannot be enforced without losing their meaning. Take a very simple example. To be grateful to one's parents is a duty according to the Chinese and according to us, but in the West there is no enforcement of this, the assumption being that enforced gratitude is no longer gratitude. Or take another example. You should mourn for the death of your parents, but if you are punished for not mourning, you really have no freedom to mourn because you are compelled to. Hegel's contention is that there is no sphere for the non-compulsory.

Another expression of the same thing is no sense of honor in China, the sense of honor which regulates that which is essentially voluntary. Hegel tries to prove that the Chinese system of punishment shows this absence of such a sense of honor: that if a high mandarin can be whipped or spanked in public without any regard for his honor, this shows that there is an absence of a sense of honor. Now this is in itself a very complicated problem, because this notion of honor as it is now understood is primarily of feudal origin. The first political analyst who made honor a characteristic principle was Montesquieu, in his *Spirit of Laws*, and there he identified it as a medieval principle. Yes? A feudal principle! That this is not a classical principle has been shown very nicely by an example given by Nietzsche. Themistocles, in a council of war, disagreed with a Spartan admiral or general—I have forgotten which—and the Spartan became angry and hit Themistocles with a whip, to which Themistocles replied: Beat me, all right, but listen to me.[iii] In other words, Themistocles wasn't for one moment concerned about his honor being affected by the whipping; he was too serious a man for these childish things, he would probably say. But for Western man, and especially for the earlier stratum of Western man, this consideration alone—of the whipping or spanking—would take precedence over every other consideration. Hegel adopts this view to some extent. I also know another example which I find very striking which I read somewhere in Bismarck, which shows to me at least the enormous difference between Russia and Europe proper.

[iii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), aph. 199.

A high officer, a General Kutuzov,[iv] who was being passed in review by the Czar, and the Czar called to this general in front of all his troops, "Kutuzov! Thou canst not write! I transfer thee to the infantry!" This would have been absolutely impossible in any Western country for centuries. This kind of honor is really a specifically Western thing, and Hegel pays special attention to it because of its extreme degree of absence in China. I suppose the Chinese would answer to Hegel in the same way that the Greeks would answer. Yes?

Student: The wrath of Achilles? That would . . .

LS: Sure. Perhaps we look that up in order to make it perfectly clear. It is on page 128, paragraph 2.

Student: "A third point is that punishments . . . very highly esteemed."[v]

LS: Let us interrupt here because these are only examples. In the German he has this additional remark: "The most humiliating thing consists precisely in this, because corporal punishment expresses this notion: that this external thing is, for man, something which can compel his inward, the inner man."[vi] In other words, it rejects the notion that the determining thing would be his own will; the corporal punishments imply that only by spanking can a change of his way of life be accomplished. This imputation is an insulting thing—not the notion that the fellow cannot physically prevent a physical assault on himself, as it were, but that he is regarded as someone who does not have the spring of action within himself and that the spring of action must be supplied through his body. This is the insulting and humiliating thing in corporal punishment.

But let us now follow Hegel's argument. There is no distinction in China between *dolor* and *culpa*, between . . . what is the English translation for that? It is on page 130.

Student: "In the Mosaic Laws, where the distinction . . . to which he may betake himself."[vii]

LS: In other words, the question of someone doing harm to any other, that's *culpa*; but if it was not premeditated or intended, that's *dolor*. There are legal systems which consider the intention. Yes? . . . and others which do not consider the intentions. According to Hegel, the Chinese do not consider the intention because of the non-recognition of the subjective will.

Now, then he speaks of the specific character of the Chinese sciences. That is on page 134 in the English, and page 311 in the German. Just read a few passages of it.

[iv] Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov (1745-1813).
[v] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 128-29.
[vi] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 308.
[vii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 130.

Student: "Though in one aspect the sciences appear . . . hindrance to the development of the sciences."[viii]

LS: . . . and so on. But at any rate, because of the absence of subjectivity, meaning a spontaneous and genuine interest in the individual, there cannot be true science in China. Similar considerations apply to Chinese art. Is this also in the English translation? Would you read it?

Student: "Regarding art, it is clear that the Chinese cannot be at home in the ideal art; an ideal does not enter a Chinese head; aesthetics is very far remote from them. The ideal wants to be conceived by the free mind; not prosaically, but so that the ideal is conceived and at the same time embodied in a body. This nation—

LS: The Chinese.

Student: "has not succeeded in presenting the beautiful as beautiful in spite of the fact that they are indescribably clever in imitating things. Their poetic literature is rich, they have many comedies in which the interests of their common lives predominate—"[ix]

LS: And then he speaks also of their landscape painting and so on, but still it is not strictly an ideal art, an art which embodies and makes sense of the ideal through the visible. The ideal is alien to them for this reason. The most important considerations, of course, concern religion, and there is a remark on page 132 . . . Will you read that please?

Student: "In China the individual has no such life . . . abundance and sterility of crops."[x]

LS: And then on page 168.

Student: "In China, where the religion of . . . is abstract unity with itself."[xi]

LS: We may leave it at that. Now let us first hear Mr. Sinaiko on China before we turn to a discussion of India.[xii]

Mr. Sinaiko: I didn't have any prepared remarks, but if you like, I can make some general remarks on the subject.

[viii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 134.
[ix] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 319. This passage does not appear in the English translation.
[x] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 132.
[xi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 168-69.
[xii] Herman Sinaiko, a Plato scholar, taught in the College at the University of Chicago from 1954 to 2011.

LS: Sure.

Mr. Sinaiko: Well, I have difficulty completely understanding Hegel's . . .

LS: Yes, sure. We will work together.

Mr. Sinaiko: My impression is, in general—and I have checked this with Professor Locke,[xiii] who has made a careful study of Hegel—is that in fact Hegel had read about everything that was available in Europe at that time about China. There is no question about that. But unfortunately what was available was not very good, by and large. There was a terrible amount of reports of missionaries, traders, merchants, as well as the reports of Jesuits, ambassadors and so on, and he seems to have taken these without any discrimination between the good and bad reports. And furthermore, there are many things left out of the general picture.

LS: May I make only a remark to your satisfaction? You see how empirical historical studies come in legitimately on Hegel's basis. Yes?

Student: May I say something at this point? Mr. . . . and I talked about this, and it seems to me that he was of the opinion that more was known in the eighteenth century due to the missionaries' work and the travelers' accounts than is known at the moment.

Mr. Sinaiko: I would like to say a little more about this. I have the impression that in the eighteenth century, in the Enlightenment, that China was used by some of the figures of the Enlightenment, because it was far away, as a kind of idealized state by which to attack this particular time.

LS: Sure.

Mr. Sinaiko: And apparently in the nineteenth century, among Hegel and others there is a reaction against this in the form of an attack on China.

LS: In other words, the attack on China is probably an attack on the Enlightenment. Yes, surely.

Mr. Sinaiko: In the meantime, too, the technological differences between Europe and China had grown immensely, and the nineteenth-century reporters who went to China were much more struck than the earlier visitors had been. The Jesuits, for instance, were much more struck by the technical development of the Chinese, and the nineteenth-century traders were struck by the backwardness, so there is a real change that occurred in Europe. The main thing which seems to run through the whole treatise is that China is unchanging. Now I am not sure precisely what he means by unchanging, but in particular terms it seems to me that this is simply wrong. But . . .

[xiii] It is uncertain who Strauss is referring to.

LS: May I first say what Hegel means by it? He sees in this that China did not change because it lacked the principle of change. What is the principle of change? That is the opposition of the objective being, let us say the substance, and the subjective movement toward it. Hegel doesn't deny external changes—killings, and wars, and what have you—but he denies that there is a significant change in China because the very principle underlying the whole authority precludes significant change.

Mr. Sinaiko: . . . and that they don't distinguish between the mythical origins and history is simply nonsense. That is to say they had standard textbooks of history that a child would learn, and this is already in the ninth century in China. These histories would go back to some mythical emperor, but already in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries people were writing histories in which they would say that in *proper* history they could only go back to, say, the second century B.C. For that time we have records, and before that it is dubious. And they were very very careful "scientific historians," as we would call them today.

LS: Yes, I know what you mean. But would you do us the favor to retranslate "history proper" into Chinese? You can use the blackboard for the characters and then interpret the characters for us. [Sinaiko demurs] No, honestly, that would help us a lot, I believe. A genuine example is more helpful than thousands of papers.

Mr. Sinaiko: Do you want the word itself?

LS: You say that they make a distinction between mythical and history proper; how is this in Chinese? This distinction?

Mr. Sinaiko: Oh! Well, in simple terms, it would be simply this . . . Can I give you a simple example, then, instead of writing it?

LS: No, no. Does it not show? Oh I see.

Mr. Sinaiko: This would be, I suppose, on the same grounds that a historian today, writing a history of the Revolution, would cast some doubt on the story of Washington and the cherry tree.

LS: Sure. But the question is: What are the categories in which these commonsensical distinctions are made? How do they call the historians or history?

Mr. Sinaiko: *Shi*,[xiv] this character is pronounced . . . It is the character which means history, writing, documents, texts; and it can also mean anything having a kind of writing. There are many such terms. There are many different kinds of history. *Dgee*[xv] is this character. It means records, and its meaning is precise; it would mean an actual document. *Shi*, this is history proper.

[xiv] The transcriber notes: "All transliterations are dubious."

[xv] As transliterated by the transcriber.

LS: This has no other meaning except history?

Mr. Sinaiko: No, this is it. This would be closest to the actual thing. Now the rest would, I think, include a lot more in general. *Shi* is a bigger term. The actual dynastic histories are called *Shi*s, so the actual title of a work would be the *Sung Shi*, the Sung History, and there would be the *Tang Shi* and so on. These would be restricted to absolutely tight documentary evidence, without any question. There are, in addition, all kinds of references, and so on. Interestingly, when they were universal history, the earliest universal history starts with Boshee,[xvi] the first emperor. In the eighth century already, when they come to write universal history, they start with the first historical dynasty for which they have records. The historians will talk about the earlier periods, but they simply don't have any evidence for it.

LS: Would the Chinese understand if someone would say in Chinese that the story of the cherry tree is not *Shi*? Or does not belong to *Shi*?

Mr. Sinaiko: Let me say that *Shi*, in this kind of history, there would be biography as part of the history. In the biography, if it were, say, history of the American government, there would be a biography of Washington; and most likely the first part of the biography would include the cherry tree story[xvii] along with similar anecdotes which every intelligent reader would probably know were hypocritical but which are told for the same reason that our children are told it: to give them some idea of Washington's character. This would be a concrete and immediate way of getting this across.

LS: But they do not have a term for designating this hypocrisy? I mean, a story that isn't history?

Mr. Sinaiko: I am sorry, but I can't think of . . .

LS: That is what Hegel means. They have no theory, as he calls it. He says they try to write highly empirical things, and such a fundamental distinction as between mythical and historical is of course a theoretical distinction.

Mr. Sinaiko: There is a distinction by which you can say something is true or false. They would talk about the simply untrue.

LS: That can be combined with *Shi*?

[xvi] This is as it appears in the transcript. The first emperor was Qin Shi Huang (259BCE – 201BCE).

[xvii] The cherry tree story appeared in the fifth edition of Mason Locke Weems's biography of George Washington, *The Life of Washington*, published in 1806. See https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-man-the-myth/george-washington-and-the-cherry-tree-myth/

Mr. Sinaiko: As a matter of fact, one of the combinations is called *pa-shi* which is the historical novel, i.e., false history, and there are records which are called *te-shi* or true histories.[xviii]

Student: When did this false and true come into Chinese historiography?

Mr. Sinaiko: About 100 B.C.

LS: So in other words, you would say that the step from indiscriminate storytelling to the distinction between true and false bespeaks a very important kind of change? Yes?

Mr. Sinaiko: May I explain just how strong it is in China . . . to the point where the standard histories are the so-called dynastic histories. Very early, from the Han Dynasty, which was established in 200 B.C., a special board of historians was established which had the function of getting one record of every single document signed by the emperor and all important public officials. They had as their job nothing more than filing, collating, and editing these documents and preserving them. When the Han Dynasty fell and the next dynasty took over, there was a complete record of the Han Dynasty which could then be written objectively by the next dynasty. And it was so done that according to law the emperor was not allowed to go into these records. He could not see or know what the historians were saying about him.

Mr. Faulkner: I think Hegel talks about the historians that would go around with the emperor. I wonder if we are not in some way missing the point which Hegel is making.

LS: May I add one word in order to clarify this obscurity? You see, it would make a difference if the historians have the function of being critics of the emperor. Do you imply that? That would indeed modify the despotic character of China. Would you not admit this, Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Yes.

LS: Yes, that would be an important point.

Mr. Sinaiko: The emperors are told this, by the way. There is the famous story of the founder of the Tang, who established [the] bureau himself, who went to see what they said about him and was refused.

LS: In fact this existed also in some Western despotisms, too. You know that some verities about Louis XIV could be said after his death. But it was not an official institution of the French monarchy that this should be done. Yes?

Mr. Sinaiko: Also, history is by no means restricted to political history. Already there are histories of economics, of science, of agriculture, astronomy, histories of land tenure and holdings, and histories of what we would call philosophy. There are more than mere

[xviii] These transliterations may be, as the transcriber indicated, dubious.

political histories, but the official histories are centered around political figures. In later times, the later centuries criticized the dynastic histories because these histories do not fit into the rise and fall of dynasties, nor [do they] develop the contrasts; and therefore modern history must not be written according to the dynastic model.

LS: What facts did they have in mind in making that criticism?

Mr. Sinaiko: Such developments as economic changes.

LS: I see. But how did they express this thought . . . because these are all somewhat dubious Western terms. I mean, give the best example you can think of to show how this development affected the writing of history.

Mr. Sinaiko: I have to expand just a little bit on this. The standard mythology of a dynasty is that the last ruler of the preceding dynasty was a terrible man and because of this had ceded the "tree of heaven," the right to rule, to the current ruler. Therefore, the rebellion was not only permissible but also a duty of the subjects. The old emperor is killed and a new man who has "the tree of heaven" rules in his place. The legitimacy of the new dynasty is marked by the fact that he succeeded in overthrowing the old emperor. Then the new dynasty goes along until there is a bad emperor and it collapses and is overthrown. Now it is perfectly obvious that starting with a good emperor and ending with a bad one is not going to fit the facts of history. For instance, one of the signs of a bad emperor is floods, and droughts, and this kind of thing. The historians knew perfectly well that this was nonsense and would talk about the problems of growing populations and the resulting press against the food supply as the creator of rebellions. They often pointed out that the emperors to whom these things happened were not bad emperors and often were good ones. The man who argued this point says that one cannot understand these events unless one realizes that between the second century A.D. and the eighth century A.D. there was an enormous population growth. There happened to be a great number of dynasties during this period, but the general population growth must be understood apart from good and bad emperors . . . Does this make sense?

LS: Yes, sure it makes sense.

Student: Was that an eighth-century writer?

Mr. Sinaiko: The particular writer I am talking about here is a twelfth-century writer who wrote a universal history.

LS: Well, they are obviously sensible men.

Student: In the one account of China that I have read, it gives the interpretation that the reason why the historians' history was more objective was that it was kept apart from the emperor so that the emperor was forced to rule in a proper fashion. Was this the Chinese interpretation as well?

Mr. Sinaiko: Yes. The universal history I mentioned was entitled *A Universal Mirror for the Instruction of Princes*. In effect, it said this was what happened to his predecessors and to pay attention to it.

Student: But was it a kind of moral obligation for the emperor to rule well because future generations would see where he had made his mistakes? If this is true, if the Chinese looked at it this way, wouldn't it seem that there was a law—objective—above the emperor, and isn't this a denial of Hegel?

LS: Sure, there is a difficulty here, but sometimes I do not know whether you want to discover more about China or about Hegel. Now let me ask two questions of Mr. Sinaiko. The first is about the other changes of which you spoke, the relevant changes which would contradict Hegel's statement that China lacked the principle of change.

Mr. Sinaiko: May I make a distinction between public history and private history? Public histories are the histories of the dynasties which are written under official auspices. Then there are what is called private histories, that is, by people who are not bureaucrats and who do not write officially. Now clearly the private ones are aware, if not the official ones, that Chinese society changes: it changes from a feudal society to a non-feudal society; it changes from a very rural, almost purely rural, to its very modern very urbanized society. The powers shift, and they are aware of this, from hereditary nobility to a non-hereditary bureaucracy and even in a large measure to an urban bourgeoisie—traders, merchants, and so on. They know all this, and this then produces economic changes, if you want to call them that. And there are very real changes in the character of the popular morality, in the character of the family itself. In the simple sense, you could say that the ideal of the noble family at the time of Confucius, by the tenth century had become the practice for all commoners.

LS: But what about this overall character with which Hegel is concerned? The patriarchal character of the government? That the whole of China is understood authoritatively, whatever the practice may be, as one big family?

Mr. Sinaiko: In this I can only say that it should be remembered that the men writing history have Confucius, which is the official philosophy and which has an approach to politics and political philosophy which is a very serious one, and they are very conscious of themselves as the controlling group. It is to their interest to maintain the fiction—and all the important ones are aware it is a fiction—that China does not change. That is to say it is a deliberate fiction introduced in the official history and the moral writings, but not into the serious histories as such.

LS: Yes, but that would in a way confirm Hegel's point, because it would confirm his view that this is the professed principle of China—and he doesn't say more. Yes . . . the professed principle of China is that China doesn't change.

Mr. Sinaiko: No, let me go a little further. They say this with the awareness that it has changed and is changing, with the aim of slowing the change and its possible adversities.

LS: Yes, but don't you see that this confirms Hegel . . .

Mr. Sinaiko: But it can change.

LS: Hegel would say that people who do that—who know that things change, but loathe it—express by this their unbelief in progress. Now their unbelief in progress means their belief in non-change. And this is what Hegel says.

Mr. Sinaiko: Yes, with certain minor exceptions of men who say that things are no better than they used to be in the classical age.

LS: These little exceptions, as you say, are probably the greatest problems for Hegel's philosophy of history because his contention is that no one can transcend the limitations of his society. Yes?

Mr. Sinaiko: Yes. And generally there is no question that the prevailing belief is that there is no progress and that change is change for the worse.

LS: In other words, they are more conservative than the most conservative Americans, yes? Now one more point, if I may bring up what I have to say, and then we have to return to your questions. What about Hegel's statement about heaven or *Tien*, if that is the proper pronunciation?

Mr. Sinaiko: For *Tien*, heaven is not a bad translation; and nature is also not a bad translation. It means the weather, the sky, and the day, also. Would you like [me] to tell you briefly what these characters mean?

LS: Please. This is the most important—[xix]

Mr. Sinaiko: —means roughly "the great man," or the ancestors, or the congress of ancestors. That is *Tien*.

LS: Yes, that makes very much sense. Hegel, of course, does not go into such nonalities[xx]; he simply takes it that the absolute is nature, not mind.

Mr. Sinaiko: The early attempts, and this goes way back to 1000 B.C., to use *Tien* may have had some personal senses, but by the time of Confucius, in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., it is completely depersonalized. There is no question of ancestors in it anymore; it is a depersonalized moral force.

LS: But *moral* force!

Mr. Sinaiko: Yes.

[xix] The tape was changed at this point.

[xx] This word is as it appears in the transcript.

LS: But how then can Hegel support his assertion that it is mere nature?

Mr. Sinaiko: I don't know. I will say this about it, the Jesuits themselves argued, in an attempt to prove in Europe because of various controversies that a Chinese could become a Christian and still worship *Tien*, that it was not a real being. They attempted to prove that *Tien* should be interpreted as nature in order to negate it, because they simply couldn't convert people unless they maintained this worship. The state insisted upon it.

LS: Yes, that would be an explanation and justification of Hegel's error. But Hegel could perhaps say this: Granted that it is a moral force, but since this moral force is thought to reside in heaven and therefore not in a thinking being, they do not make a distinction between nature and mind. Therefore, it has the inevitable tendency to become understood in terms of nature rather than mind.

Mr. Sinaiko: Yes, I think there is no question about that.

LS: Then his decisive point is correct?

Mr. Sinaiko: In this sense, yes.

LS: It is only not so detailed, as historians would say.

Mr. Sinaiko: Yes. May I say one thing about morality? On this ground I can only say that he has been completely taken in by the reports of missionaries and traders and by the surface appearances of the Chinese imperial translations that he read. That is to say that in all the posted laws it has been enacted, quite rightly, that sons should be filial toward their fathers and so on; but there is absolutely no question, from the earliest times, as to what can be enacted and what cannot be enacted. Even Confucius made this a serious distinction. There is one point in the *Analects* of Confucius where a boy asks why he should mourn three years, and Confucius tells him not to. Another disciple asks him why he said that, and Confucius answers that there is no point in mourning if you don't really feel it, but a child who understands will accept and truly mourn.

LS: Yes, but I don't . . . I am afraid that Hegel would say that a command to mourn does not last as action beyond that. And what . . .

Mr. Sinaiko: I only meant that a moral man does not necessarily, in Hegel's system, deserve success in this world. He speaks of this in connection to the case of a man who stands for his morality and yet is cut down by the state law. In neither case is duration or success assured because of their morality or their father's spiritual order.

LS: Yes, but still . . . That is very good, but in what connection does Hegel say that . . . that the moral man can and must be satisfied with the inner qualities of his actions.

Mr. Sinaiko: One connection is that he has the assurance of knowing that a higher level of morality would ensue.

LS: He cannot have had that in former ages. Take the case of the very virtuous Roman. No, on the contrary, I would say that it has something to do with a certain degradation of morality as compared with the historical process. In other words, in order to stop the moral criticism of history, of historical process, Hegel says that the moral men get all they want and cannot complain if they are crushed by the conqueror on whose side is the world spirit. So, on the contrary, if the historical process is infinitely more enduring than any individual, one could draw the opposite conclusion from your reference.

Mr. Sinaiko: It is not its duration by virtue of which it has its superior spiritual status.

LS: That is also true, yes. Still, what is the alternative to Hegel or to any philosophy like Hegel[’s]? That is a very wide and indeterminate question; I am referring to certain things I said at the beginning of this course. What about Plato and Aristotle? What did they say about the relation of the enduring and the momentary? Which has the highest status? The enduring! But still, would Plato not also admit that a rose has a higher status than a mountain?

Student: Sure, a rose has a nature.

LS: And where does the enduring come in?

Student: It comes into the nature of it.

LS: Yes, one can speak of essences. But more practically and commonsensically, Plato would say that the flowering of the rose is only one stage of the rose: there was the seed and then the flowering, and then there will be other roses coming from the new seed. So the permanence is in the species, and you make an unfair comparison if you compare the mountain with one individual of a species. When you compare the mountain with one species of living beings, they are equally enduring. I mean, you don’t even have to go to the idea. Yes? More generally stated, for the classics the highest being, what is simply highest, is necessarily always and unchanging. The reasoning is extremely simple, because whenever you say change, you say “is” and “is not,” or “was not” and “is.” Every change is a mixture of being and not being, but true being is [the] only one which is beyond change. That is a simple point. This implies the famous contempt for what is now called history. History is the realm of change, and of a particularly derivative change, so it is not particularly relevant philosophically; therefore there is no philosophy of history in classical thought. But if you say history is a higher form of being than nature in any sense, then you have to rethink the relation of being and permanence. And this thinking is implied in Hegel’s philosophy. The problem has only become clearer now for the reason that Hegel still speaks, and insists on speaking, of the simply permanent, which he calls, as it was always called, “the eternal.” And Hegel’s *Logic* is exactly the attempt to present the eternal in its purity.

Student: What was that?

LS: The eternal . . . in its purity! The relation of being and not-being, becoming, and so on are eternal evident necessities which can't be affected by any change. But today, in the age of what is popularly known as Existentialism, the eternal is exactly to change. Philosophy is for the first time trying to deny the possibility or necessity of any eternals. The momentary peaks, one can say, are the highest; momentary and unpredictable loci are the highest. A historical decision, either in the simple political sense or even in the sense of the individual, is the highest manifestation of being. The highest is not the permanent as permanent. The later view is implied in all we think today—if we do not reflect, because the moment the classical elements which are still very powerful in Hegel are dropped, that is what comes out of him. Yes?

Student: It doesn't take very much out of Hegel if you say the momentary decision is the highest, if your momentary decision is the universal.

LS: There is this great difference. For Hegel these crucial decisions, if we can call them decisions—Alexander the Great, or the beginning of Christianity, or the French Revolution—are in a way fulfillments of an eternal promise. You know? And to that extent they still belong in the context of the eternal. Let me begin this sentence again, because it isn't pointed enough. What is really important for present-day man—and I am speaking now of men who are only present day and not people who belong somewhere else—what is for present-day man the highest in his orientation . . . the most authoritative? Science! Yes? Or perhaps the nature explored by science. All right, but science rests on fundamental premises. What is the status of these premises? Because that is the authority of the authority. If someone would say that there are eternal laws of the human mind—only some old fogey would say that—what is the common view? What would the logical positivists say?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but *convention*! Yes? And these conventions have rationales, some of which prove to be better than others, but they are all conventions. And these conventions of course are not forever, yes? With the progress of science they change. So the highest is something fundamentally momentary. I mean the moment may take two generations, it may take a hundred years, it may also take five years; but this is not a fundamental difference. Or if you take the somewhat more sophisticated historicists' view according to which modern science with its conventions doesn't suffice, because the conventions themselves are the result of a prior understanding which makes possible such conventions, then this is a historical world view in the German sense—later German. If you go beyond the world view—you cannot go beyond the world view because all human thought rests ultimately on specific premises which vary from historical periods or historical units. That is the authority of the authority! The connection between these world views as a meaningful connection is no longer possible to assert, because that presupposes the fundamental rationalism of Hegel. There is no fundamental necessity that you should go over from Egypt to Greece, for instance: it happened. And after it

happened, it is decisive for later men, but there is no logical necessity there. That is today, I think, the most common view.

Now if this is so, it means that the highest is essentially historical, i.e., has come into being and will perish again and is definitely not permanent. Anything permanent which is thought to be permanent, the speed of light or whatever it may be, is integrated into the non-permanent, because as a formula it makes sense only in the context of this broad approach which is called modern science and which emerges somehow from the Greek notion of science. So the historical view as opposed to the Hegelian historical view draws the most extreme conclusion from this seemingly simple thing which Hegel illustrates by the somewhat misleading example of the blossoming rose and the mountain. Anyone in his senses would say that the rose belongs to a higher order of being than the mountain, because the rose lives and the mountain does not live. But as I said, the question does not concern the individual rose, it concerns the species; and ultimately it comes down to the old question of whether being in the highest sense must not be permanent. This does not mean that everything permanent is the highest—to say nothing of the fact that mountains are not simply permanent, because we are compelled to believe that mountains have also come into being and perished. So one would have to seek permanence in something other than mountains.

Now there are some other points which we have to consider. There is a remark which I will read to you because it has something to do with the point we alluded to earlier. Unfortunately it is not in the English translation, but it is in the German on page 491. Hegel speaks there of the science of the Egyptians, which has been praised very frequently, as you know—probably based on certain passages in Genesis, and also a Greek tradition that always came from Egypt. Especially Pythagoras was said to have come from Egypt, and [he] is said to have learned certain mathematical theories as well as philosophic assertion in Egypt. Hegel says that "even if we were forced to admit that the Egyptians have had similar philosophic doctrines, similar to that of Pythagoras, they still would have to be distinguished from the point of view on which people stood."[xxi] What does he mean? This is also a very revealing remark: Let us assume that there was a secret wisdom of the Egyptians, that of certain Egyptian sages; this is of no interest to me if it does not affect Egyptian life as a whole. That is a principle of Hegel, that public life is alone the fully real, not private. Whether that is sufficient for the understanding of history is of course a very great question. Hegel accepts the general principle that the intellectual progress and the social progress are parallel. You could of course say that about the Greeks. Did the Pythagorean philosophy ever become a part of the Greek popular notion? One could raise this question.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but that leads to grave questions. I know practically nothing of the Egyptians, but I do know that they had two striking systems, one of which was the demotic, the

[xxi] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 491. In the original transcript, this sentence is not placed in quotation marks, even though it appears on p. 491. The "revealing remark" just below is placed in quotation marks, even though it does not appear on page 491.

popular one. And I also know that it [was] not merely the difference of convenience and satisfaction for most people, but it had something to do with the content of his writings, and there are quite a few references to the fact that Egyptian priests knew or believed to know quite a few things which they did not publish. And that applies, I think, to . . .

Student: But they probably understood . . .

LS: Yes, but then you have the practical consequence that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. And then you have to raise the question of what precisely is that core of the life of a society. Is it not the wisdom of their wise men? And is not the wisdom of their wise men simply identical with what people generally say? And then you have to make a study of the two levels, you know?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but science never became a social institution in Greece.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No no. I'm sorry, but you have not . . . It is hard to follow such organization, but let me read it again: "Even if we should be forced to admit that the Egyptians had similar philosophic doctrines as Pythagoras . . . "

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes! Now let me see . . . We cannot possibly go into all these details. Is there a particular point that you find especially in need of discussion? You mentioned the point that the Persian Empire is characterized, in a sense, as the universal empire insofar as it embodied the three geographic possibilities. Can you repeat that?

Student: Well, Hegel says that for the first time a people that didn't live in a river valley became the people that control the thought of a large area . . .

LS: And in addition, the Persians were mountaineers; then they had controlled a river population—Mesopotamia; and in addition they controlled a coastal region—Phoenicia, and to some extent Egypt itself. And therefore this gave Persia this peculiar universality which no other empire had. But on the other hand, he says that this universality was a superficial universality. Does it not amount to this?

Student: Yes, in a way, because some of the characteristics that come from the cultures never permeated even Persia.

LS: No, it is the other way round: the Persians did not even try to imbue the subjugated nations with their own specific spirit; they left them free to follow their own national spirit. The light, the Persian principle, shines over all the elements of the Persian Empire.

I didn't know it had gotten so late! Is there any point which you would like to bring up and which we could discuss in a few minutes?

Student: As you said before, doesn't that deny the absolute morality that we were talking about? I mean the modern view that since morality becomes a convention of the times, that absolute morality is denied.

LS: Mr. [. . .], don't you know that this is so? I mean . . .

Student: Well, I just wanted to . . .

LS: I think the most sophisticated forms of historicism would not say that morality is a convention; they would say that it is a kind of historical state which has nothing to do with any plans or establishments of any kind. Yes? That is of course one of the most obvious difficulties of this position, that the morality of a society depends on its peculiar basis, and therefore there are perhaps different moralities for different people. Yes? Now this works all right, perhaps, if you take specific social institutions—polygamy, monogamy, and other kinds of things—but if it refers to more personal things, things which do not concern social institutions as such—the virtues like honesty and courage and so on—it is hard to see how this should by its nature be changeable. Yes? I mean a Chinese gentleman has different modes of action; probably he is somewhat more modest in his utterances than a gentleman in any other society. You know the famous joke in which the Chinese gentleman says: "Please enter my humble abode and take a seat on this creaky and dirty chair and do not be offended by my ugly children." I don't know if that is true, but that is what they say. Still, you know that some substance of what it is to be a gentleman is to be retained in all these nations of a somewhat higher development. This is a difficulty for these people.

Student: Wouldn't that be denied when they say that the word "courage" or "freedom" or "slavery," for that matter, changes from epoch to epoch; it is an entirely different thing, and it poses different things at different times?

LS: Yes, I believe that this is a moot question. Some would say that, surely, but still the most sophisticated people say that there is something permanent which characterizes man, civilized men at any rate, regardless of the differences in societies. This identical thing does not allow of a universally intelligible expression, but it appears necessarily in different historical guises. Yes? The classics assume that it is; and modern science, in its way, also assumes that it is possible to save the permanent in a permanent manner, if I may say so, meaning a universally intelligible manner, yes? . . . in principle. In some cases people have to change their language a bit. The case I know best is Hebrew, in which people had to change tremendously in order to make possible the translation of Aristotle. But that can be done, and I am sure the Chinese can do the same thing, only it would be a bit more difficult, I think, for them than it was in the Semitic languages. But the Greeks imply that this is really, so to speak, a technical problem; there is no fundamental problem. What the *logos* says is possible to express in every language, with some improvements on the language, maybe, because of the technical terms. Yes? But

the strict historicists would say there exists a fundamental untranslatability and the more important a word is, the more impossible to translate it, meaning the names for colors are easily translatable, but the name for the good or just is not translatable. You can translate the mere word, but not the idea.

Hegel saw this problem of historical relativity probably more clearly than anyone up to his time, but for Hegel the problem was not dangerous because there was a connection which linked all these varieties into one rational whole. And the only limit to intelligibility which Hegel emphasizes is that of simple feeling. He says over and over that we cannot feel what a Greek felt when he worshiped Zeus but that this is the least interesting, because most interesting is what they thought about Zeus—and that we can find out. And we can also show that this is wrong, what they thought about Zeus, and therefore this is not a serious problem. And [there are] quite a few things which we cannot feel; for example, if a man has never had a toothache, it will be very difficult and perhaps impossible to feel what another man who has a toothache feels; but once he knows what his locus is and what the possible limits are, that is not so important—I mean that no great secret escapes him if he can't feel the other man's toothache, and therefore this doesn't create a great problem. Yes? This is the last question.

Student: I was wondering if the revolution in communist China, in Russia and China, which created communist Russia and China, as contrasted to the Nazi development in Germany, is not indeed a development of the consciousness of freedom among a variety of peoples. I mean that while at the present time these people are subjected to a very rigid substantial freedom and are, to use Hegel's terms, not allowed to subjectively question this substantial freedom, nevertheless this process of discipline, this process of education, could be interpreted as a necessary step to achieving what neither Russia nor China had had before: the consciousness of their own thoughts. You said earlier that Hegel would probably see this as something outside the development of history, as mere chance.

LS: That is a very complicated question. The most intelligent contemporary I know who says he is a Hegelian would fully agree with what you say. But he implies that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is not the last word of Hegelianism; the last word of Hegelianism is what he calls "the universal homogeneous society." Universal means here a world state; and homogeneous means no discrimination, to use this famous term, on any grounds of nature, i.e., of birth. This is, you know, the old Napoleonic principle that "every soldier carries the marshal's baton in his knapsack"—provided he is good enough, that is clear, but reasons of birth or caste do not play any role. This could also be enlarged to abolish the legal difference between the two sexes. That is easy! Sure, provided it is perfectly understood that this is a considerable change from Hegel's explicit teachings. You could at least try to show that it follows from the spirit of Hegel and that Hegel, simply in virtue of the practical impossibility of a thing like that at his time, simply didn't draw a logically necessary conclusion. Yes? Whereas under no circumstances is it possible to make a case for the Nazis on the basis of Hegel. That is true—I mean up to this point. The most intelligent Nazi of whom I know, Carl Schmitt, a German public lawyer, said it very succinctly. He said that on the 31st of January, 1933, Hegel died—meaning that the Hegelian tradition was still of immense power, and not only at the universities but also as

far as the German state was concerned, up to this moment. And the crucial point was simply that the rule of a highly educated civil service was split. Yes? So the difference between a monarchy and a republic was not so important as was the substitution of the masses, of the party, for what was wrongly called "bureaucracy." Bureaucracy has already this bad connotation of these "damned bureaucrats," whereas when we speak of "civil service" it has an entirely different meaning. Hegel calls this state "the state of the intelligentsia." By this he did not mean intelligentsia as now understood—which would have been represented in Germany by the coffeehouse inmates—but he meant the state officials, including the university professors but not only them.

Now still this up-to-date Hegelianism of which I spoke . . . the author of it is a M. Kojève, whose name is now quite well known among students of Hegel. He wrote a very good book on Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind* which is of course half Marxist; there is no question. But the decisive difference between Marxism and this kind of Hegelianism is, in the first place, that the economic interpretation of history is not the basis, it is really the history of the mind; and secondly, there is no prospect of the abolition of the state. A withering away of the state is completely out. This also fits Hegel. The question is whether there are not essential reasons for leaving it at the non-universal state. You know? In other words, the possibility of war—whether that is not a question into which one would have to go. That the connection between Marx and Hegel is not merely fictitious is obvious, in spite of the tremendous changes; and in Marx himself this notion that [it] is really a liberation movement is very strong, but that is a long way from . . . I mean, that is a hard question, where the liberating movement has become a mere bureaucracy, a military and other bureaucracy, and where the liberating has taken on the form entirely of dictates from above for all foreseeable future. You know there are even Marxists who say that this is no longer Marxism; and there are some who draw the line between Trotsky and Stalin, as you know. It is a complicated question. I believe that for Hegel a structure like this, which lasts not only for a few years but for a long period, in which the simple rights of man are abolished and also where there is no possibility of a decent criticism of government . . . I think he would have said it would not work.[xxii]

[xxii] The transcriber notes that the remainder of the tape of the seventh session is inaudible.

Session 8: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —and therefore you have a point—not yet the argument, but a point as to the future argument; and therefore you have the direction of your future study and research.

Student: Wouldn't this mean that to the extent you know where to look . . . In some examples it might mean that for a lack of cleverness of that political person . . . I mean, it would still seem that at the end, the establishment of the extensions, you would have to make use of some very comprehensive non-empirical reflections on human nature.

LS: Sure. That is true, but that is a question that we discussed before: the breadth and depth of the student is an indispensable condition for the historian. I see that the practical difficulty is very great; those who do not fulfill certain requirements cannot be historians, but it does not create a theoretical difficulty, it seems to me. The practical difficulty is very great because there are not many people who could be historians in any respectable or remarkable sense. I hope there is no misunderstanding between us.

Student: Oh, no.

LS: Because in every field there must be people who do a kind of auxiliary work, and our academic routine does not permit us to make an administrative distinction between the men who are auxiliary to historians and the men who are historians. That is a distinction we should make as a matter of course when we are reading, yes? All so-called methodological questions can be solved. Theoretically! But that carries much less conviction than concrete examples. For example, I became aware some time ago of the great importance of concealing opinions in earlier preliberal societies. Yes? And I have heard the objection very frequently that when a clever man tries to conceal his opinions, no one will ever be able to find out. Stated in general that might make some sense, but there is always—in every concrete case there is a direction noticeable in which to look. To say nothing of the fact that this generality, preliberal society, and [the] absence of anything looking like a First Amendment has in itself crucial implications which can be understood deductively by thinking this through and leads to certain general rules of reading.

Student: May I ask about one last point, something we talked about before: the final ultimate judge of who is more objective than someone else will be an opinion, won't it? It would have to be. Other people will be reading it, and . . .

LS: Who is to be the judge? . . . the Book of the Month Club?

Student: Well, not necessarily; the other men in the field will be your judge as to how correct you have been.

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 7.

LS: Yes, but that is hard to say. I mean that one can perhaps say this: the long range opinion is sound. One can perhaps say that, for example, the glory of Plato and Aristotle is greater than that of any other ancient philosophers. That makes sense to me at least, and to quite a few other people. But you know that there are quite a few people today who say that Plato was surely the most gifted of these men but was also the most wrongheaded of all. You know? And therefore I think opinion is not sufficient; and if you speak of the opinion of a profession, this is also not infallible at a given moment because it is always rent into at least two factions.

Student: But there is always a question about objectivity.

LS: Yes, sure, we can never lay down and . . .

Student: You can never say "I am being objective," because although you say it, other people can disagree with you.

LS: No, it is never so vague because a mere empty disagreement is of no interest. It must be free of all that. Let us say that in an empirical subject the locus of objectivity is really the empirical, meaning the study of this particular document or this particular doctrine or whatever it is; and no one who does not study it carefully can know what he is talking about when he speaks of objectivity. Yes?

Student: Well, this is assumed . . .

LS: Yes, but you are young. I have seen what sometimes happens in the professions, sometimes not by young people. Young people should have a proper respect for their elders, who are at least more experienced, I suppose, but one should not go too far into that. You know? There is no possibility of a substitute for using one's head. No machines which anyone might invent can guarantee objectivity, because a machine still has to be used by someone and their findings have to be interpreted by someone. That is impossible; that is not the way for looking at that. Any empiric[al] question is a concrete question and requiring concrete evidence, requiring concrete argument, and then one can argue it out and see. The real difficulty, I believe, and the much more serious difficulty in the professions is the fact that seriousness is so rare. That sounds like a harsh judgment, but I feel that I am now old enough to say that is true that concern for irrelevancies plays an enormous role in all walks of life, and the academic profession is not an exception from it. And one must simply face this. I know when I was very young I was impressed by every controversy and every opinion because I was unable to make this distinction. When I saw for the first time, in a seminar, that a leading man who belonged to a certain faction who was discussing a view to which I happened to adhere at that time, which I learned from my teachers, didn't understand what the issue was, that was for me an eye opener, a crucial experience. You know? A full professor may fail to understand what is the burning issue of his profession. Then I began to make distinctions! And I suppose you all go through this experience sooner or later. There is no mechanical— [ii]

[ii] The transcriber notes that some of the audio is lost here due to a defective tape.

—Now what did you find to be so paradoxical about this part of Hegel's philosophy of history? I mean, if you start from commonsense views which are embodied in our understanding of Western tradition, is there not something rather strange here?

Student: There are several things. One is that the Egyptian and not, for example, the Jewish, was the proper tradition.

LS: Yes, that was also the most striking thing to me, because if we would start from today analyzing our culture, we would come immediately to these two sources, Greece and Judea, and Hegel regards the Jewish element as a rather insignificant part. When we come later to the section on Rome and to Christianity, which emerged in the Roman Empire, he remedies this completely. He knows, in other words, that for the Western world the Old Testament is infinitely more important than the . . . Why then does he use this procedure, this clear procedure?

Student: One reason is that he doesn't regard the Jewish spirit as in a way above the Persian spirit. In a way it is only a part of the Persian spirit. It has the unity, but it doesn't have the concreteness. He thinks that both are necessary, and therefore the transitional state must be one that combines them both.

LS: Yes, but that is still not sufficient, because for Hegel the fact that the Jews were the only ancient nation which was monotheistic and which understood God as spirit and in no way as nature was of absolutely decisive importance. The criticism of Judaism is . . . I don't know whether it comes out with sufficient clarity in the translation. The criticism can be stated as follows: Judaism is not Trinitarian. The Old Testament God does not have this inner distinction which the Trinitarian doctrine implies. But on the other hand, the spiritualism distinguishes it so radically from all other religions to its advantage, [so] that this superiority is not denied by Hegel, as you will see later on when we come to the section on Christianity which forms a part of Hegel's analysis of the Roman Empire. Here you see Christianity introduced into the context of the Roman Empire, and the Jews are introduced into the context of the Persian Empire. You must start from this fact. What does he mean by that? He means that Judaism became a universal power, an element of world history, ultimately by its issuing into Christianity but primarily by becoming a member of the Persian Empire. You see?

Hegel tries to show the connection between the different national spirits and the process of world history. That appeared from your remarks, that he emphasized so strongly that China and India did not become a part of the West, of world history. Yes? They are unchanged; that is his contention. And of course they will be subjected—that is, not excluded—by the West, as we see now. I am not speaking of military conquest, but that Western ideas revolutionize these societies. That is not excluded, but in themselves they do not have a tendency toward this; they never effected to an important degree this movement. And Hegel says this movement started from the Persian Empire; and therefore, in a sense world history begins with Persia, because Persia is in this stricter sense historical and India and China are not. Therefore Persia has perished; being a part

of a movement, it succumbed in its turn. The same will be true of Greece and Rome, but it cannot be true of the Christian world because of the finality of the Christian truth. Of course, "Christian truth" must be understood in Hegel's terms, where it becomes intellectualized and rationalized and is therefore not what orthodox Christianity means by that. Is this of some help? Which part of your difficulty is not disposed of now?

Student: Oh, I was just going to say that there are other things which could be pointed out as problems. For instance . . . [iii]

LS: Yes, but that is partly due, probably, to a lack of familiarity on your part with Hegel's terminology. Or do you also mean that it presupposes a knowledge of fact, or of alleged fact maybe?

Student: No, it seems to me that what he said in the introduction is that you could see what he contended was true by merely being presented with the empirical course of events.

LS: I see! I must correct you. It is not simply the course of events. You made it very clear that the course of events is absolutely ambiguous. For example, the fact that Persia vanquished Egypt is not proof of the superiority of Persia, yes? Just as a victory of the Greeks by Alexander over Persia does not in itself prove the superiority of the Greek spirit. You have to look at the substance of the Greek spirit on the one hand and the Persian spirit on the other. The mere course of events is not decisive. The "empirical procedure" of Hegel means this. He looks at the various cultures, let us say, and he takes them as they are. He does not rely on the various hypotheses by modern historians. He takes the most obvious, most massive, most well-known facts. Egypt, for example. Everyone knows that: the pyramids. And that means a particular concern with the dead; and this is then supported by things other than the pyramids. So the preservation of the human body, the dead body, is characteristic of Egypt. Furthermore, the extreme animal worship. I mean, they worshiped many more kind of animals than the other nations did. These are brute facts, massive facts, and Hegel raises the question of what they mean. How is the cult of the dead and this extraordinarily broad animal worship connected?

And then he takes another very massive fact which every child knows from photos today: the Sphinx, this human head connected with an animal body. And the traditional meaning of the Sphinx is that it is a being which poses riddles. And this is the third element; and Hegel then gets this formula: Egypt is the land of the riddle. And he tries to show how both the cult of the dead and animal worship become clearer if you understand them in the light of complete mysteriousness. And then there is the strange fact that the riddle of the Sphinx was solved—also an old story known to every child. Who solved it? Oedipus! But we don't have to make such nice distinctions. A Greek solved it. And then Hegel says that this is a very profound truth. We can perhaps start later from this very passage. The mystery was solved, at least in the decisive direction, if not completely, by the Greeks.[iv]

[iii] The transcriber notes that there was a defect in the tape at this point.

[iv] The tape was changed at this point.

—would, I think, lead very deeply into the understanding of Hegel. Let me give you an example. Herodotus was the first man, as far as I know, who tried to understand what one could call in Hegelian terms "the spirits of nations," and he proceeded in a way which is not so different from Hegel. The big events of history as Herodotus knew them were the Persian Wars: the Greeks defeated the Persians. On the simple level, one could say that the Greeks were simply better soldiers than the Persians, at least at that time, and therefore they won Marathon and so on. But Herodotus is not satisfied with that: he asks for a deeper and more meaningful reason than mere military superiority. And then the answer was in a way obvious for the popular mind: the Persians were a terrible people. And what did they do? Of course they killed and burned down, but any armies do that, more or less. But the Persians burned down the temples. They were strikingly impious. This story that Xerxes punished the Hellespont . . . and laid a river or sea in chains. Of course the same thing, the same pride which shows itself in the historic assemblage of the gods. So Persia is damned for impiety, and Greece stands for piety. That can, I think, be assumed to be a part of the popular interpretation.

And now there was one other nation which was particularly important because it was also a very great nation and it was defeated by the Persians. That was Egypt. Now Herodotus looked at Egypt. What did he see? What everyone could see: they were much more religious than the Greeks. The Greeks worshiped their gods, but, for example, they didn't worship cats, and they didn't worship bulls . . . and all this kind of thing. So Herodotus came to this conclusion: the Egyptians are characterized by excessive piety; the Persians are characterized by deficient piety; and the Greeks are characterized by moderation, meaning the right mean between the two faulty extremes.

Now it is a very long question as to how Herodotus integrated the other nations into that scheme, but it is clear that the Greeks, Persians, and Egyptians were the key nations for him. Yes? Now this is a starting point for Hegel, and I think Herodotus is probably the greatest single example also for the more specific things. You must notice—in the German translation you would have seen it much more—that Herodotus is mentioned more frequently in this section, far more frequently than any other writer, not only historians. So what Hegel means is this: he takes these images, you can say, which were created perhaps more by Herodotus than by anyone else, as sound descriptions of these nations. If he has modern evidence in addition to those, of course he uses it. You know? That is the meaning of his empirical procedure. To repeat, he takes the cult of the dead, the worship of animals, and the Sphinx, and then he reflects; [1][he] goes beyond the mere external evidence: "What is the objective connection between them?" And that is then the objective meaning of it. One could say—and I appeal again to our historical friend— that given such a high degree of ingenuity as Hegel undoubtedly possessed, it would have been possible for him to find meaning in anything. Yes? That I believe one could say. In other words, there is a certain arbitrariness which is inevitable. If Hegel had said, "I regard as the spirit of a nation what this nation itself regards as its spirit," that would be a somewhat different story; but then one must make a clear distinction between what these people themselves say explicitly as to what they regard as the highest. For example, if you take Christianity, you must take the Christian dogma, yes? The Christian dogma, or

the fundamental rules as laid down by Christian authorities and councils and so on, or in Protestant countries by an equivalent of that, that is the real thing. Or in America you take the American Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and then you have really the authoritative statement, and then you can work your way upward. But Hegel would of course say that this is not always possible, and not only because of a mere defect of explicit utterances. There is no Greek dogma, for instance, but you can very well speak about the Greek culture, because we have Homer and Hesiod. We can speak of the Olympian gods and the . . . gods as the two most authoritative phenomena of the Greeks; and also there is the *polis*, which we find everywhere, and not just a territorial empire, so we can start from these things.

But if we start from Egypt, Hegel would say that there are many cultures whose very principle prevents their speaking explicitly about their principle. Now Egypt, as Hegel presents it, would be a good example of this, because if the essence of Egypt has this enigmatic character, which means radical symbolism where you can never say A symbolizes B but that with equal right you can say that B symbolizes A, any attempt to express this conceptually affects already the phenomena. I mean, this is a very real problem which everyone would encounter who tried to study anthropology. Take a simple trial. You try to understand[2] [a people], and understanding of course can never mean merely giving external data, that's clear—I mean, you must describe, surely, the terrain and the race of the people, but the most important thing is of course what they believe in, or, to be more positive, what they *bow* to, what they regard as the highest. Yes? But it may very well be that this question addressed to such people, say, the wisest old man there, wouldn't be understood. A certain level of reflection is already required to understand this question. I mean this general difficulty is already well known, because in every questionnaire the problem arises in one way or another as to whether you do not modify the situation by sending the questionnaire.

But let us stick to this example where it is already particularly clear. Here a man comes in who is, let us say, an anthropologist from the U. of C., and they have never seen anyone apart from the members of their tribe. They simply cannot understand that man! Here is a man who doesn't want to trade with them, he doesn't want to cheat them, he doesn't want to find refuge with them because he has committed murder at home. Now what would be the other reasons why people come to them from the outside? That he should come to them exclusively because he wants to find out the truth about them is a wholly unknown thing to them. To the extent to which they become aware of what he is doing, they are already affected, they are already changed. Do you see that? In other words, the question is where and to what extent you can begin to raise these empirical questions like what it is to which they bow. And this of course has to be immediately supplemented in order to be reliable: "Was this opinion of your tribe throughout the ages, or did this creep up only fifty years ago?" This would make a great difference. And therefore Hegel would say the strictly empirical method, simply to find out what these people bow to and how they understand what they bow to, may very well come dangerously close to transcending the horizon of the society. Hegel has no particular qualms about that, as you know, because he simply says that he knows what the sound principles are, and therefore he has no compunction whatever about imputing to societies things of which these people are

unaware. He would simply say that they don't know, but Hegel knows. But still his starting point, and I think he means that very seriously, is to take the facts—not little facts like the use of various metals and so on, which are not in themselves revealing, but the fundamental facts like what they bow [to].

You see that this is really his method of analysis of Africa. Compared with all other parts of the world, we have here a kind of human who do[es] not bow to anything—that is the characteristic of this nation, whereas all other societies bow to something. That is what he calls objectivity. He also speaks about Persia, where the most striking fact is really this peculiar concern with purity, both bodily purity and purity of the heart, we can say. Yes? And this clear-cut opposition between light and darkness, between goodness and badness, and where goodness and light, the moral quality of goodness and the physical quality of light, are identified. Now what does that mean? It means that there is no distinction made between the natural and the spiritual, as Hegel would say, and yet the spiritual is somehow there, but imperfectly because it is not clearly distinguished. Then he goes on that this light and darkness is very good, this antithesis must be there between light and dark, good and evil, but on the other hand it is defective because the common source of both recedes into the background and is no longer the theme of their thought. The right thing would be to see the mind, the objectivity, the substance, as spirit, and then to see how this spirit splits itself into mind and nature and ultimately into good and evil. And this is the absolute.

But before we go into any details, I think we must get some clarity that we are not wasting our time with something which is not worth studying carefully. We have today the opinion—and in this respect I agree—that the only way to find out about history, about the variety and sequence of cultures, is empirical historical studies. One should start from this and yet see if Hegel does not bring up questions which are likely to be forgotten by empirical history, including anthropology, and which must be raised. I know at least one of you who is in very great difficulties in finding a way there, and there may be others.

Student: I have a question I would like to ask, but not in relation to what you . . . What does Hegel mean by this Trinity? What is it?

LS: Well, first the Christian dogma of the Trinity: God-Father, God-Son, and God-Holy Spirit. But for Hegel that was not a mystery of faith; for Hegel that is an evident necessity. Yes? Now in the absolute there is an inner articulation; for example, the ordinary view in general theism is that God has many predicates, omniscience and so on. That is not what Hegel is interested in because these are all equally attitudes of the same being which does not have any inner differences. Yes? And Hegel contends that this procession of God-Father, God-Son, and God-Holy Spirit admits this inner articulation of God. Now what does this mean philosophically for Hegel? I gave you an example in his criticism of the Persians. The Persians have made this fundamental distinction between light and darkness: the light is the thing which is divine, and the darkness is the anti-divine. Yes? In other words, they do not see the divine in the anti-divine. This anti-divine must be taken into the divine. Differently stated, empirically we do not find mind and

nature, but Hegel contends that we do not understand nature if we do not understand it as opposite of mind, the other mind. But that means of course a modification of mind, and therefore this opposition of nature and mind must be conceived as not only part of the absolute but as something into which the absolute by inner necessity splits itself in order to restore itself on a higher level. Self-consciousness of the absolute, yes? We, or rather Hegel claims to have understood fully the absolute, and that means that in him the absolute has reached self-consciousness. This, Hegel claims, would have been impossible if there had not been nature in existence in opposition to the mind and, by virtue of this opposition, a development of the mind from this African beginning to this very complicated stage—to certain things in the 1800's, for instance.

Student: Well, what does he mean by mind? Could this be a kind of . . . would you like me to ask my question?

LS: Yes, surely, that is a very necessary question.

Student: Well, when mind is fully conscious of itself and there is complete freedom, the individual is his own lawmaker, he can determine what is right—is this what he means?

LS: Yes, but this . . .

Student: Now let me continue. But this doesn't lead to chaos of any sort. This is not a superman type of conception: the individual finds that his law is the same as that of every other individual who is also as free as himself?

LS: Yes, sure, it does not mean the arbitrariness of the subjective will.

Student: Because the subjective will is in a sense in its true essence, the object; that is, I mean it is the union of subjectivity.

LS: All reasonable human beings, fully active reasonable human beings, think the same. Yes?

Student: They think the same when they are thinking freely, and they . . .

LS: There is no possibility of thinking unfreely.

Student: In other words, his consciousness is [a] reflection of the absolute.

LS: Yes. But you can express it also in a more specified way. Man's reason prescribes to all men the same principles of conduct—not necessarily the same kind of actions, but the same principles of conduct. And therefore the truly free men all think the same thing.

Student: This is what is incomprehensible to me. Accepting this, how does a man know that he is acting . . . I take it that he is acting in terms of the universal consciously. How could he know . . .

LS: Take a Hegelian example: slavery! Yes? There are quite a few societies in which slavery may be just. Aristotle, for example, makes this famous remark, and the . . . even did it in a much cruder way: "Slavery is just!" Hegel says that once the mind has reached maturity, it becomes clear to everyone that slavery is radically unjust. Today I think most people in America and in the Western world altogether think this. Don't you think so? Perhaps even the whole globe by now, with some minor exceptions. That is something. That some people would like to enslave others and wish they had slaves, Hegel admits; there has always been crime or irrationality in the world. But all these people who spoke throughout the ages of the moral law or the natural law did not mean anything different in this respect. I mean, for example, the prohibition against stealing: Is there any difficulty to understanding, at least in a general way, why this should be regarded as a rational prohibition?

Student: No.

LS: That is what he means!

Student: But when you carry it further, into everything, this puts a great burden on the individual. When he acts, he is going to be acting in terms of universals in his moral position, and in many particular situations it is not so clearcut that slavery is unjust or that stealing is wrong. Sometimes it is necessary to steal! And he is assuming that in the same situation every individual will act necessarily in the same way.

LS: Hegel would say that when it is necessary to steal, starving is really the alternative. That was always admitted. And in addition, he would say that in a rational state there is even a positive legal position for that. So if a starving man goes into a bakery and takes a few rolls and he can show that without any fault of his own he is really starving, nothing will happen to him, even if the baker himself has not the sense to refrain from pressing charges. Yes? What is the difficulty? I mean, blondes or brunettes is no serious difficulty; that, Hegel would say, is for everyone according to his taste and according to what is intended by the two people—they really don't say more than that they like brunettes more than blondes. Yes? He doesn't say that everyone should do that. That is no problem. But what is the difficulty? There may be complicated cases regarding property, for example, which are not so simple as theft and non-theft, but what does one say about that? One says that these are matters for positive law to decide. Hegel would say that of course you have to be lawabiding, and if anyone would transgress the law which makes the situation clear for everyone, then he is an irresponsible man; he doesn't know what he is doing, because he doesn't know that his whole existence depends on a legally ordered society—which includes the possibility that he must obey some laws the reasonableness of which he is not convinced. But this can never apply to the highest principles, Hegel would say.

Student: Well, it seems to me that things are so complicated in any one decision that you never know, at least I don't think I could know, that what I was doing was a universally correct thing. Or take legal situations where, although a thing is decided one way, the arguments become so complicated that there just doesn't seem to me to be any way . . .

LS: Sure, but Hegel would say that civilized society provides for that by having law courts, by giving the judges proper training so that they can decide the cases as reasonably as possible. And perhaps they have a hierarchy of judges at the top who are supposed to be the most thoughtful and the most experienced in these matters. More than that you cannot expect.

Student: That is right! That is exactly what I am saying. More than that you cannot have.

LS: But the question concerns only the principles, but that is terribly important. Take the example of slavery, one favored by Hegel himself. The ancients, to say nothing of the Hindus, did not have any doubts as to the legitimacy of slavery, and Hegel contends that with the emergence of Christianity it becomes clear that men are essentially free. In other words, the deepest thing is something which excludes the possibility of slavery. Now Hegel knew that slavery lasted a very long time into Christianity, and he said that this had to be because the mere announcement of Christianity was not sufficient. Christianity had to transform, to act as a lever within the world; and that took, in his opinion, about 1800 years to be achieved. The stages of this we will see later, when we come to it. But now it is absolutely impossible to maintain it any more, for any sensible man. He would say that if Aristotle defended slavery, this was because Aristotle did not have a sufficiently deep understanding of what freedom is, of what mind is. Yes? The details we must see when we come to them.

Student: What good is the principle, if the facts still overwhelmingly deny the principle?

LS: Which facts?

Student: The facts of a complicated human existence which deny the fact that you can be rational in any one position. It seems to me that this is what . . .

LS: How can you prove that man cannot be rational?

Student: It seems to me that it would be up to him to prove that man can be rational.

LS: But you said "the facts."

Student: Oh! I think that the facts of life, or commonsense experience, seem to indicate that it is very hard to be . . .

LS: Sure, but "being very hard" and being impossible are different. The law makes a distinction between people who are not responsible for their actions, between people for whom it is really impossible to act rationally. The possibility of becoming insane exists

for man, that is clear. But that sane men, sane as defined by law, should not be able to be rational in some smaller spheres, some in larger spheres, does not follow from the fact that many people frequently do not take the trouble. Punishment is meant to enforce the rational part of man because, for example, some people are really convinced that while violent acts of embezzlement are alluring, the danger of "doing time" under very unpleasant conditions will induce them not to embezzle and so on. Surely irrationality exists, and only a great fool and a completely inexperienced innocent would deny that; but the question is whether the world is not so built, and even society is so built, that with a more or less greater effort every human being would be rational. That is the question. Yes? Hegel did not believe in an abolition or a withering away of the state—that is, of the jails or other institutions. He knew that it would always be necessary to exert some compulsion in addition to rational appeals, but still the rational appeals work to some extent. That is so! Yes?

Student: This question is in reference to Egyptian history. I don't know whether this is correct, but is it not so that Pharaoh Akhenaten was somewhat different in his religious views?

LS: Who?

Student: Akhenaten.

LS: I don't know how it is pronounced in English. Yes. But Hegel didn't know anything of that.

Student: Even if he didn't mention him, could he reconcile him with his views?

LS: I believe it is not difficult—it is not impossible, at any rate, because Hegel would say two things: It did not become a character of Egyptian society, it was a mere episode; and secondly, for Akhenaten—I know this only from very indirect sources, of course, and I am not an Egyptologist—the highest god, perhaps the only god, was identified with the sun. You know? It therefore was not something which was not surpassed within the Persian Empire by the Jews. Yes? It is as though Hegel had drawn a big circle and not put in one dot which did not affect the overall picture. I don't believe it would. There may be parts of history of which Hegel was unfamiliar and which would modify him radically. For example, some of you may have read Spengler's *Decline of the West*, where Spengler contends that around the first or second century B.C. an entirely new culture emerged which he called the magic culture, which is different from both the classical culture and from the modern world. And so Christianity is only a part of this larger whole called the magic culture. And there is a German scholar called Hans Jonas[v] who wrote a book on Gnosticism in which he takes up a modification of the Spenglerian thesis and says that Gnosticism is a phenomenon entirely different from both Christianity and the classical world. Therefore one would have to say that if this is correct, which it very well may be,

[v] Hans Jonas (1903-1993), who was Jewish student of Heidegger's at Freiburg before fleeing Germany in 1933, published *The Gnostic Religion* in 1958.

then Hegel would have to find a place for that. But I think Hegel would have sufficient ingenuity to find one. This, if you please, is my criticism of it.

You know there is much meaning in the world, more meaning than we ordinarily believe, and a very ingenious man will be able to find that meaning much more frequently. The compelling character could come only from a very clear method in which the identity of a culture and the identity of its spirit could be established. The case is clearly different if you speak, for example, of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is fairly simple to do that there, in principle at any rate, by what are the authoritative utterances of each religion as to what is the truth. Whether you can address this question to the Greeks, for example, is already doubtful because there is no dogma in any sense; and if you go into the question of what the most famous men said, say, Homer or Plato, there are very great differences. This question concerns, however, not only Hegel but all present-day historiography, with the possible exception of Marxism—the possible exception. You people speak, without any hesitation, of a "spirit of an age," for example. That it makes some sense becomes clear to us perhaps sometimes in the difference of generations. I mean, if we were to read a book written perhaps sixty years ago, there would be something which would make it clear that no one would write such a book now, or no one would paint such a painting now, and so on. And if you reflect on that, you arrive at some broad picture of an epoch. This has frequently been done. The most common example is probably Jacob Burckhardt's *Renaissance*;[vi] but it is done all the time. It has great plausibility, and I must say I believe it is also superficial, because the most interesting things, I find, are not understood this way.

My experience is of course limited, but if I take Machiavelli, whom I have studied, I must say that I have not been helped in any point to speak of by the well-known observation that he belonged to the Renaissance. What the Renaissance meant to Machiavelli has to be established entirely out of Machiavelli. One can perhaps state the difficulty as follows. In order to establish the spirit of an age, one must start from the most striking phenomena of that age, and then one ascends to that understanding of the spirit of the age and uses it as a kind of explanation of concrete phenomena. You know? There is a certain, to me, impossible circularity in that procedure. If I want to understand what Machiavelli was, for example, I am not helped at all by the presupposition that Machiavelli belonged to the Renaissance in any significant sense, because the fact that he belonged to the Renaissance can only be established by studying Machiavelli. I am absolutely sure that there were people of the Renaissance who did not belong to the Renaissance; there are relics, you can say, or maybe just mavericks. Why not? In other words, these collectives, whether spirits of ages or spirits of nations, are in themselves a questionable thing. This is the reason why I do not believe it, although it is always enjoyable to read about such sweeping pictures of an age. Huizinga[vii] did the same thing. These always have the feeling of a wonderful picture, but how far it is true and illuminating is a very doubtful question. As far as I know, Burckhardt has long been abandoned by students of the

[vi] *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860).
[vii] Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) was a Dutch historian who wrote *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1919).

Renaissance because Burckhardt is said to have underestimated the massive power of Christianity in that age. Is this not the chief objection?

Student: The objection I have heard is that he underestimated the economic inner workings of the Medici in Florence, for example.

LS: Yes. Well everyone did at that time; this was a special Marxist contribution to history which came a bit later . . . after Burckhardt. No, it is quite clear that Burckhardt gives the impression of a new kind of paganism, of this-worldliness. "The discovery of man and the world" is a formula which he took over from Michelet,[viii] I remember well. And what happened to these people who tried to be exact is that they had to discover one Renaissance after another. And now you have *n* Renaissances, the first of which was under Charlemagne, yes? The Carolingian? Well, I don't know. Then there is an Islamic Renaissance, which is at least as old. Now the very old-fashioned view starts with the massive unities: societies—political societies, I mean—churches in the old sense of the word where . . . you know . . . Christian republics, or wars, which are units of a sort: there is a beginning and an end to every war. This sounds to me like a much wiser and truly empirical history. Yes?

Student: Why couldn't you make certain generalizations about certain contemporary American events which would link together such things as thought and technology?

LS: Yes. But I think you make here already certain presuppositions which, if true, allow you to proceed that way. You say "contemporary America." You have, of course, to draw a line! What do you mean by "contemporary America"? After the Second World War, I presume.

Student: No! Right now!

LS: What is "right now"? This very second?

Student: This minute.

LS: But this very minute has already passed, so you must really have a somewhat more precise criterion and say "after the Second World War." All right, and you do that, and then there[3] [is] an infinite variety of phenomena, and you would have to know what are the things to consider, to look for; and there may be very striking phenomena, very striking. For example, I understand that the external relation of the two sexes has greatly changed in this country. Let us assume that this is true. Surely, then, you must establish this as a fact. Perhaps broad experience is enough for that; the passions, or even statistical data—women in professions, and so on—would have to enter. But then the question arises that there are other changes: Must it be so that they are all intelligibly connected? And must it be so that they are all due to one cause, say, economic changes? A very long

[viii] Jules Michelet (1798-1874), French historian who authored a multi-volume history of France.

question. That you can draw a picture, say, a super-Baedeker,[ix] of an age in order to travel in a world and see what are the sights, that I do not deny; and they are very amusing to read. But the question is really that of their possible theoretical dignity. I am not so sure of that. I must say that in my own historical work, which is in a very limited field, I found I never needed it. I never needed it. On the contrary! For example, those very simple things like Hobbes and Stuart absolutism, Locke and William of Orange. Yes? That is in a very superficial way true, but never does it touch the substance of these people.

But this discussion is very pertinent, because I don't believe there was a single man in this whole world who was more powerful to produce this orientation as Hegel. What you had before was Montesquieu, and when he speaks of the "general spirit" he meant something very innocuous. He said that a variety of possibly independent causes, like climate, trade, and what not produced a certain state of affairs; and you can describe that, the external consequences, because of the interaction of these things. For example, he found that the British are spleenish had something to do with their having Parliament. This was very thoughtful, of course, if a man like Montesquieu thought it; but Hegel speaks of a substantial unity, not a unity caused by the confluence of independent factors. But how to proceed in that thing—I mean, how to do it really empirically? Is everything which happens at a given time simply contemporary? Are there not always relics? If so, then you must make precise studies and say how these relics were modified by the circumstances. Some backward parts of the country may even be different than they were twenty years ago. Even there you must do it. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: I wish I could do that, but I can only give a very poor answer—but I believe it points in the right direction. By Herodotus these things are done with a certain playfulness; for Hegel, chance is strictly subordinate to meaningfulness. Yes? For example, when Herodotus has these nice stories about the Egyptian thieves in the palace of the temple which Hegel uses, well, for Hegel that is immediately a typically Egyptian story; but the question arises that maybe Herodotus didn't mean to characterize the whole of Egypt by it at all. So without a close study of Herodotus, I cannot answer that question. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No. I contend that it is purely empirical and in no way a speculative assertion to say that up to this point there is no more important source for the substantive philosophy of history of Hegel than Herodotus. That makes it all the more necessary to find out what Herodotus meant.

Student: [inaudible}

[ix] Baedeker travel guides, published by the company founded by Karl Baedeker (1801-1858), were particularly popular in the early twentieth century.

LS: Sure. Hegel will have modified Herodotus decisively. But simply starting from the necessary historical question that whenever one studies an author, even a philosophic author, one must know who are the men whose work he used explicitly, yes? That is always an important question, I believe. It is necessary because no one can write everything he thinks. That is absolutely physically impossible. Everyone must make some presuppositions. Now the most interesting presuppositions of philosophic writers are implied in their references to their predecessors, yes? Does that make sense? Because the predecessors either positively or negatively indicate the horizon in which the thing in question is viewed, and since he would have to write thousands of pages which from his point of view are wholly meaningless in order to clarify that which everyone knows. So when Hegel here uses Herodotus as his most important authority in the substantive part of his philosophy, not the theoretical framework, a close comparison between Herodotus and Hegel is indicated. I have no judgment on this Herodotus question to speak of, but I have seen it in other cases. When Hegel speaks of Aristophanes, I found that his remarks about that subject are the most profound I have ever seen, apart from Plato's, and therefore I would assume it is worth studying it both ways.

Now let us turn to a few specific passages. I think we will begin at the end, on page 221, paragraph 2; in the German on page 510, paragraph 3. Begin where he speaks of the transition from Egypt to Greece.

Student: "The spirit of the Egyptians presented itself . . . the solution of the problem in question."

LS: Helios, the sun, is the son of night, of the goddess. And that means that out of the mystery . . . the veil of the goddess is taken away by the sun. The mystery is solved.

Student: "This lucidity is spirit . . . humanity in general is summoned to self-knowledge."

LS: This is only an interpretation of what the word means, yes? Self-knowledge does not mean looking at a mirror, or psychiatric treatment. It means to know what man is. Yes?

Student: "This mandate was given for the Greeks . . . precipitated the Sphinx from the rock."

LS: In German it is "the Greek Oedipus." Yes?

Student: "The solution and liberation of that Oriental spirit . . . by civil laws and political freedom."[x]

LS: Now in German that is more precise: "This knowledge which Oedipus possesses is purified only by political law,"[xi] as distinguished from the patriarchal order under which Oedipus lived immediately—by itself, that is, that this knowledge is deductive, as it

[x] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 220-21.
[xi] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 511.

proved to be in the case of Oedipus. You see Hegel gives here an extremely important interpretation of the Oedipus myth, which is strikingly different from the popular interpretation. Oedipus, the Greek, solves the riddle of the Sphinx. The riddle of the Sphinx is, "What is man?," and Oedipus knew what man is. But why is this knowledge which Oedipus acquired not salutary but disastrous? What did Oedipus not know, although he knew what man is?

Student: Who he is.

LS: He did not know himself! Now Hegel interprets this to mean that he did not know himself because he did not live as a member of a *polis*; he was only a patriarchal chief. The question is whether that is deep enough for Sophocles, and whether we do not find one of the real difficulties in Hegel here. Could one understand Oedipus's fate somewhat better, taking it for granted that Oedipus is the solver of the riddle and that he perishes though that? In other words, is there perhaps a connection between the solution of this riddle and the Oedipus crime? Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: In other words, Hegel assumes that the true knowledge of the most important things, let us say of man, can become completely embodied in civil society. Then you have the rational society. Whether Sophocles meant that is another question entirely. It could very well be that Sophocles meant that to solve the riddle of the Sphinx is identical with having committed this indescribable crime which Oedipus committed, that there is a tragic relation between knowledge and society. But Hegel excludes that *a priori*.

There is another passage in this neighborhood which we should read. It is on page 221, in the middle of the next paragraph.

Student: "If we examine this fact of transition . . . it had any advantage as compared with transience."[xii]

LS: Now that is a very important statement which one can easily overlook. Duration is no affection[xiii] in itself; the momentary, so to speak, the rose, is higher than the always enduring, the mountain. Does this ring a bell, this great statement? Because Hegel touches here on the fundamental problem in this remark.

Student: Isn't that similar to the treatment of the moral individual?

LS: In what respect?

Student: The moral individual[4] [supersedes], in this life, through his morality.

[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 221.
[xiii] This is as it appears in the transcript.

[1] Deleted “That”
[2] Deleted “them”
[3] Deleted “are”
[4] Deleted “super-sets”

Session 9: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —Your paper would have gained considerably from the suggestions that I made at the beginning of the course: typed, and a certain number of pages—seven, roughly; but that is not decisive, of course.[ii]

Now let me take up where you left off, the world-historical. Disregarding Hegel's special interpretation, how could one say of a given thing that it is world-historical, as another is not? For example, if a Zulu tribe in Africa fights with a Bantu tribe, and they fight again next year, and one year one is victorious and the next year the other is victorious, are these world-historical events?

Student: No.

LS: No. Common sense would say no, whatever common sense may mean. Now what is world-historical? Give a clear case of something which is unquestionably world-historical. Or, if you please, give a definition of what is world-historical—not for Hegel; let us disregard Hegel and find out . . . Let us ascend to Hegel on the basis of our humble efforts.

Student: Obviously this depends on whether you think Hegel…

LS: No. On the basis of our everyday common sense?

Student: History which has changed the course of world composition.

LS: Let us start from today. We would say that a world-historic event would be one which affects all men. How about that? All inhabitants of the globe.

Student: Do you mean "directly" affects them?

LS: Directly. Now let us start from this simple meaning. For example, modern technology is in this sense world-historical, because it affects everyone—even the remotest villages of India, as you can hear from any expert on India. It affects them perhaps not directly—they don't have water closets immediately—but certain changes are taking place in their society. In this way they are affected. Now let us say that modern technology is a clear case of the world-historic event. Then we must of course say that everything which contributed to technology, which prepared it, is also of world-historical significance. Now the basis of technology, I take it, is science. Where does science come from, what we call science?

Student: I don't know what cause you are looking for.

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 8.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: Let us say modern physics, from the time of Galileo and Newton. But that is not the beginning of science, it is the beginning of modern science. But the beginning of science itself, the very idea of a rational account of the whole, is much broader and older than modern science. It begins with the Greeks—speaking very broadly, that is. So in other words, by simple commonsense analysis of technology, we reach the conclusion that the Greeks were a world-historical people. And if we would enlarge that, we would find some others, yes? But since we are now concerned with the Greeks, let us leave it at the Greeks for the time being. So there is no question that if you take [a] more specific criterion . . . and think of the content of our morality, Western morality as commonly understood, where a central part of it is the impossibility of slavery, yes? Now in Greece, there was at least a questioning of slavery. There was slavery, but there was also some questioning of slavery. Therefore, the Greeks are closer to us than those nations which had slavery as a matter of course and did not question it. Yes? I mean, one must not lose one's common sense, because Hegel had a lot of it, only Hegel interpreted it in a very sophisticated way where the common sense is sometimes not so immediately visible. One only has to look at what Hegel says when he has to defend himself, where he has to descend, and then you see his amazing commonsense information. Good. So let us say that after all the world-historical is not such a great problem. It is not such a fantastic proposition to say that Greeks were a world-historical people.

Let us concentrate on the other element, the state. Now your argument was based on something of which Hegel had already disposed in the first part, namely, the state does not mean merely the political. We discussed this. I don't have the passages here, but some of you will remember that I discussed it in the form of the accusation that Hegel deified the state. Now Hegel makes it perfectly clear that the highest for him cannot and is not the state, although of course he would say that the state is higher than economics; that goes without saying. But the simple example of the Hegelian distinction between the objective mind—the sphere of morality and politics—and the absolute mind—the sphere of religion, art and philosophy, in which the absolute mind is of course higher, disposes of this objection.

Student: I don't think it does, because I wasn't maintaining that Hegel deified the state; I was only maintaining that Greece as a whole was not a state by any definition.

LS: I will come to that. Yes. But that is not true, because Hegel understands by the state the objective mind, in the first place. That which is authoritative over the individual. That is clear. Primarily the authority is the *polis*, the laws of the city, but what is the ultimate support of the laws of the city, according to the city?

Student: The political whole.

LS: No, let us be empirical. The gods of the city, yes? But the gods of the city, i.e., the gods which the city worships, are the same in all cities with only minor variations regarding cults. So that to which the Greeks looked up, that to which they bowed, was something to which they bowed as Greeks and not merely as Athenians. Although the authoritative decision as to whether the sacrifice should be made in this way or in that

way is dependent on the local priests, still this depended in its turn on the previous assumption of the Olympian gods which were common to all Greece. And therefore Hegel's point is that the Greeks did not have national unity, [a] national state, as a consequence of their notion of the gods, ultimately. I mean, that is the way in which Hegel would look at it. You are quite right when you say that the Greek state was a defective state because of this lack of agreement between the highest and the political organization; but that is what Hegel himself says, only he says that it was better than the Oriental state. Yes? This incongruity of a national spirit but not a national state is for Hegel a proof of the peculiar defectiveness of the Greeks as well as of their peculiar superiority over the Orientals.

Student: I wonder if Hegel doesn't many times define the states in terms of the constituting definitions they give; that is, that it constitutes the citizens? It seems to me that it is less misleading to distinguish the whole as a people who do indeed bow to this common religion.

LS: Yes. But if you speak of the people—and Hegel speaks of the "folk mind," as you know—it could easily be understood to mean that you have a multitude of subjects, say, the Greek peoples, who are as such authoritative; whereas for Hegel the people are as they are, the Greek people, by virtue of these gods in which they reflect themselves. Without this reflection, without this objectivation of the Greek mind in the gods, there would not be a Greek mind. It is not so that you first have a Greek mind, a popular mind, and then this projects itself in the gods; the Greek mind *is* this objectivation, this projection. That is Hegel's point. And therefore, looking at it from within, from the Greeks, you see not the act of objectivation, you see the gods. And only in the process of disintegration, of unbelief, let us say, does it appear that they are only the reflection. Yes? And this is for Hegel the state in its wider sense, I admit. The only point which you made that is valid is that the term "state" is used ambiguously by Hegel, but since he clarified the ambiguity, it is not a criticism which really hurts him. For Hegel, "state" means the complete objectivation of the "folk mind, not only the political—although the political has, in a way, an empirical superiority. I mean, the most massive fact is the Persian wars and later on Alexander's conquest of the East, but what this means can never be understood in terms of the political history according to Hegel, but you have to consider what Greece stands for. That is the Greek "state." The ambiguity is there, but since Hegel was aware of it and pointed it out—we have read these passages; they occurred in the introduction—there is not an objection to that on this ground.

Now to link up the discussion with what we discussed last time, I remind you again of the crucial point and the *simple* beginning of Hegel: the Greek mind is understood in terms of what the Greeks looked up to, and the Greeks looked up the Olympian gods; that is to say, beings which are no longer natural forces but which are glorified human beings: the easily-living gods, whereas we humans do not live easily. The gods have this character that they are human, and that is a progress compared with the Orient, where you have animal worship or worship inarticulate—that which is not human, the pomegranate, the heaven in China, or some natural forces. A god that is truly man will die, that is the

Christian message. The defect of these Oriental religions is that the gods are not human enough; they cannot die.

Now this is connected with something else. There is a multiplicity of such glorified human beings, the Olympian gods, so they don't have a unity since the unity supplied by Zeus ruling them is not enough; and therefore there must be a unity beyond them which the Greeks recognized—the *Moirai*, the fates who governed the gods. And this is wholly non mind-like, non-spiritual, in that it doesn't have a mind-like character, and therefore there is still something like nature which is the highest. If the absolute is to be mind, Hegel contends that God, the name for the absolute, must be truly man, i.e., he must have died. The Greeks are not truly spiritualistic because they are not in this sense humanistic. That is what Hegel said. This is a halfway house which is most important because the Orient is overcome, but it is only the beginning. We must keep this in mind in order to understand Hegel's concrete analysis.

Now as for the dialectics, the concrete way in which Greece destroys itself necessarily because of this imperfection, there are various ways in which one can state it. One way—I will mention another later—is very simple and is on the basis of what Hegel said. You remember the emphasis on the description of art in Homer, not art in the highfalutin' sense, in the simple sense of the shoemaker or carpenter? Homer's admiration of these activities means the recognition of the crucial importance of art. That is transcending nature, to use Hegel's terms. Now this principle of the superiority of art to nature will eventually lead to the destruction of the Greek unity, because when a consciousness of art, *technē*, becomes sufficiently clear, then it becomes science or philosophy, and then Zeus will go. That is one way of stating it. There is also another way, which we will see later.

If we turn now to the political part and to Greek history, we must understand that Hegel is not at all concerned, we can say, with classical political philosophy. I mean that if you criticize Hegel in the name of Plato and Aristotle, you are unfair because he does not think of Plato and Aristotle, so to speak. He speaks of the actual Greek *polis*, and Plato and Aristotle come in in a subordinate manner as representatives of the decay of the *polis*. But take a simple thing: the *polis* should be essentially democratic. Plato and Aristotle turn in their graves, surely, and from their point of view this is all right. But Hegel says, as many people and almost all historians of today say, that they didn't know what was going on at that time; the real thing is the actual *polis* and how the actual *polis* understood itself. Within this framework we can also say something as a kind of appendix about the acts of its philosophers. In a way, this is a perfectly fair way to look at them, because Plato and Aristotle didn't want to be mouthpieces of the Greek *polis*. To this extent Hegel is absolutely right. They wanted to find out what is the best form of human living together, which is something entirely different from being theorists of the Greek *polis*. To that extent, both sides are satisfied provided one doesn't say that what they tried to do is trivial—which Hegel would never say, but here he is not concerned with that.

Now if we turn to the actual *polis*, what do we find—very superficially, the most massive things which every child can see? In the first place, these were all republics except for

short periods of kingship and tyranny. This is already a great difference compared to the Orient in general, where you had these large empires, kingships, and what-not. Secondly, you ask about Tyre and Sidon and Carthage, and Hegel says that the priesthood was simply a citizen office, simply citizen, there was no priest-rule. Priestly offices were like other civil offices, only they had special functions. So the Greeks had republics without the rules of priests. That is most striking, and Hegel tries to understand it.

Now Hegel goes beyond that and makes a remark which creates a difficulty which you wisely dwelled upon. He says that the Greek cities were democratic. First of all, what does he mean by that? I mean he doesn't have in mind that there was no property qualification or something of that sort.

Student: He means that the citizens as a whole participate in the government.

LS: Yes. Now this is what one means primarily by a republic, a *res publica*, an affair of the public. You see, when you look at this you must not forget the political conflicts of which Hegel thought when writing on such things because we, especially in this country, know of the conflict between half-democracy and democracy, between republicanism and democratism. We do not know the big issue between monarchy and republicanism any more because it is no longer in our bones. Yes? I mean, those who have historical knowledge may know it, and those like myself who were born under a monarchy still remember it, but it is not immediately available. Look, for example, at seventeenth-century England. There were two parties; one was the Royalist party. How did the other party call itself?

Student:You mean the Roundheads?

LS: That was in a way only a part; Roundhead was only a nickname. How did they call themselves?

Student: The Whigs?

LS: That was later on. I mean in the broad course of the seventeenth century. Well, for example, the name "Commonwealth Men" occurred. This is English for republican. Another name was "patriots," the patriots versus the Royalists. Do you see what this means? Only the patriots, that is, the republicans, have a fatherland, because it is the king and the crown for the others. We have forgotten that the notion of the fatherland and the commonwealth was once a problematic concept.

Another thing which occurs to me is that I read somewhere that Queen Elizabeth didn't like to hear the word "state" because the state was a republican notion, or at least it was not obviously Royalist. She wanted to speak of the "crown" or something of this sort. So "republican" means decisively non-monarchist. The monarch is not understood as an organ of the state, as it was in the constitutional monarchist doctrine of the nineteenth century, but was understood in this older doctrine as the owner, the lord and master who

ruled not by virtue of a derivation but in virtue of a right which was inherent in his family or in the crown . . .

A republic is then a community, a state in which the people rule; and we don't have to consider niceties like whether all the people rule and so on, only that it is certainly not one man or dynasty that rules. Now if this is so, then this community, the *res publica*, does not obey another human being as they would in a monarchy. The principles of conduct are within each member of the community. Yes? And if it is to work, they all are patriots, they all are dedicated to the common good. There is no mediation through a king. The extreme case of this would be the Chinese emperor, as described by Hegel—the extreme opposite of the republic, where you have one father of the whole through whom everyone else has an access to the right and good. In the republic, everyone has immediate access to the right and good. Did you notice that Hegel quotes his immediate source for the interpretation of the *polis*? He used another expression for this patriotism, a more old-fashioned expression.

Student: Virtue?

LS: Yes. Who had brought this up and said that the principle of a republic is virtue?

Student: Montesquieu.

LS: Yes. Hegel quotes him. Montesquieu plays a tremendous role for Hegel. But Montesquieu expressed himself more specifically by saying "popular government"; the principle of popular government or democracy is virtue. Hegel simply accepts that. There is no originality on this point in Hegel. In order that you can see that, let me read a few passages from the *Spirit of Laws*, book 3, chapter 3. I mean, how could anyone in his senses say that the principle of the actual Greek *polis* was virtue? When we read the historians they complain all the time about the terrible vice which was present everywhere in Athens and Sparta.

Student: But Hegel says that historians like Thucydides are just comedy men[iii] and just followed after the decay; and empirically this is the truth.

LS: Which, of course, is Thucydides, yes? And Thucydides also does not speak of virtue as the principle of the *polis*; he doesn't say that. Now let me read you one sentence.

> The Greek politicians or political writers who lived in the popular government knew or recognized no other force which could maintain them [I suppose the popular governments—LS] except the force of virtue; the politicians of today speak only of manufacture, commerce, finance, wealth, and even luxury.[iv]

[iii] This is as it appears in the transcript.
[iv] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, book 3, chap. 3.

LS: So here in the first place is a perfectly defensible statement. Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Xenophon, and whoever you have said that the thing for the city, the thing without which the city can never be good, without which the city can never work, is virtue. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century people said, "No, we don't need virtue; we need comfortable self-preservation." This is what Locke said. Yes? Virtue comes in only in a very subordinate manner—people must not steal and that kind of thing—but virtue is not the principle of the city. So here we have of course a statement of the "oughts," the modern "ought" as distinguished from the Greek "ought." The actuality is another matter. Hegel, however, could say that the "ought" characterizes the society in a way more than the day-to-day proceedings. For example, who today would give a factually correct description of American political processes and be silent about the American aspiration or the American dream, [the] American ideal? It would be at most a half-truth. One could perhaps say that he who speaks of the American ideal speaks more truthfully about America than he who speaks only with a right and real description of the smoke-filled rooms and other things. Certainly the ideal is as much a part of a society as it its so-called reality. That is what Hegel would say.

But we also have to consider Machiavelli, who speaks of virtue all the time and who sometimes means by virtue something which we would call vice—the qualities which Cesare Borgia had, which no one apart from Machiavelli would have the courage to call virtues. But in his *Discourses*, which deal chiefly with the Roman Republic, he uses the term virtue all the time, and mostly, at least very frequently, in the old sense of the public spirit; and the public spirit is essential to republics. Monarchies do not need public spirit because there the forces of the prince hold things together. So the view that virtue is the principle of the republic, and especially of the classical republic, is simply taken over by Hegel, partly from Machiavelli and more directly from Montesquieu. Of course, that does not excuse Hegel if it is wrong, but it certainly shows that this is not a peculiarity of Hegel.

Incidentally—and I would mention this also for another reason—I have come across in some present-day social science literature that going back to Graham Wallas,[v] as I found out a short time ago, there is an attack by the more streamlined modern political scientists on an old-fashioned school which is said to have taught that democracy presupposes that all citizens are virtuous and reasonable, since we now know through Freud and others that this cannot be the case. I was wondering who these people meant, and I believe that they ultimately mean Montesquieu [and] Hegel. But Montesquieu and Hegel were not democrats, and I wonder which democratic theorist took this over and asserted that virtue was the principle of democracy.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: I see. But this is also [the] eighteenth century, prior to the French Revolution . . . and Robespierre, in his way . . . Surely that is clear. But which respectable people, if I may say so, here in America?

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[v] Graham Wallas (1858-1932) was a British political scientist, Fabian socialist, and co-founder of the London School of Economics.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, Locke doesn't say that. Locke never says that virtue is the principle of democracy.

Student: In his rationale he uses it.

LS: Yes, but I would say not so clearly as in the form that democracy, and only democracy, is that regime which is based on the reasonableness of its citizens. That would not be Locke. Yes?

Student: Mill?

LS: Yes, one cannot help thinking of Mill in this connection, but I wonder whether he really explicitly says so. I don't remember. But at any rate, in Montesquieu we have the formal declaration that the principle of democracy is virtue, and of course the realistic study of the workings of democracy shows that, as these people contend, the principle of democracy is not virtue. Yes? And that leads to an entirely new conception of political science, as some of you may know.

Now let us understand Hegel's conception of the Greek *polis* a little bit more clearly. The term "democracy" is indeed questionable—I would say it is questionable because unless you start from the premise that whatever is not monarchic is democratic, the term is ambiguous, too sweeping. What is the characteristic? I think if you turn to page 250 in the English, second paragraph, and page 599 in the German.

Student: "The state unites the two stages just considered . . . a self-conscious spirit of the individuals."[vi]

LS: Yes, that is all we need. So that is a new thing: the spirit of the subject, too. So in other words, that is the difference between the Orientals and the Greeks. But what is the limitation of the Greeks? Hegel uses this expression, "there does not yet exist a conscience."[vii] And on the other hand, there also does not yet exist the emancipation of passion, the emancipation of greed, of ambition, or whatever have you because patriotism, a feeling which all have equally and which does not go to the root of the individual, predominates. The general formula, the infinite subjectivity, has not yet emerged in the Greek *polis*.

Now what is the proof of this? The simple proof is that such terms as "infinite subjectivity" are untranslatable into Greek. But that, of course, would not suffice. Now let us look at the concrete phenomena which Hegel had in mind. The "infinity of the subjectivity" means that the individual draws everything before his own tribunal, be it the tribunal of the conscience or be it the tribunal of mere selfishness. The Greeks do not

[vi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 250.
[vii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 253.

raise the question of why they should obey the *polis*. There is no question for that; and that is wonderful to look at, Hegel says, but it is not enough. The practical expression for that is "the rule of custom." There is something unquestioned and unquestionable outside of man. This "custom" which empowers every citizen equally—in other words, it does not favor a monarch—is the higher development of subjectivity insofar as everyone is empowered, but it does not have, consciously, its root in the subject. It is something objectively given. There is no need for justification, custom says. They may be called unwritten laws, and that settles it; the question of why these unwritten laws are valid doesn't arise. Think of Antigone. Its origins are unknown, and its inner rightness is still more unknown than its origins, but that doesn't detract from its sanctity.[viii] It establishes its own sanctity. That is what Hegel means. The highest has essentially the character of a custom which empowers every citizen equally, and the Greek mind in its flourishing period is unable to question custom. The moment it begins to question custom Greece decays, whereas the modern world is characterized—that is the implication of Hegel—by precisely the principle of rational reflection. Simply stated, the Greek *polis* is unaware of a natural law which is identical with a rational law or, in other words, the Greek *polis* is unaware of the rights of man. The post-revolutionary society is a rational society. Here reflection is not a force which makes for the decay but for confirmation. In all earlier societies, reflection was a force making for decay, and Hegel will show in detail that the three characteristics of the Greek city—slavery, smallness, and oracles—follow from that. We do not have to go into deduction.

I mention only one point in order that I do not do an injustice to Hegel: that the oracles were in many respects questionable. Yes? They probably were corrupted by all kinds of people on different occasions. For Hegel, this would be only accidental; the main point is that there is no modern society in which it is imaginable that the political authorities would have recourse to oracles—in their capacity as political authorities, at any rate. In other words, there may be a president or senator who goes on the sly to a crystal gazer, but clearly there is no institutional justification for that. In Greece there was such justification, and this has to be understood. Hegel shows that this is a lack of rationality, insufficient rationality, if oracles could still be used. You have only to read the Greek historians, Xenophon and Herodotus more than Thucydides, to see how terribly important oracles were—how the intestines of the sacrificial animals looked, you know? One could say—Hegel would say—that it was absurd to believe that there is any rational connection between the looks of the intestines of a bull and the outcome of the next battle. But Hegel would also say that we cannot condemn this as mere folly because before the state of full rationality has been reached it is inevitable that you have such things. Now I believe this point is clear in Hegel, but we must always keep in mind that he is not speaking of classical political philosophy but of the actual *polis*, and he is trying to understand its operational principles, to use a term which is now prevalent. Yes?

[viii] In the *Phenomenology*, par. 437, Hegel quotes the following lines from *Antigone* about the unwritten laws of the gods: "They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting, / Though where they came from, none of us can tell."

Student: I have a general question about something you said before which I don't understand in Hegel and of which I am sure that Hegel was aware. That is the rational man . . .

LS: You are sure Hegel was aware of the problem?

Student: I am positive of it, because it was a problem that was present in the eighteenth century, and . . .

LS: Well, that is very good. I like to hear that, and I would say, even without hearing the reasoning that you gave, that I also regard it as probable. Good. Now what is the question?

Student: The rational man who sees these right ways, in Hegel's terms, why will he be rational, and why won't he be controlled by his emotions rather than his conscience?

LS: Of course he will be controlled by his emotions in many cases. Sure he will. There are criminals and there always will be criminals. Hegel did not believe in a withering away of the state. There will always be these nice institutions like decapitation, jails, and other things, and there should be these things. There is no sentimentality about it.

Student: Well, carried further, this is also the distinction made in the eighteenth century, that the government will be rational but the people may not be, but what about the government not being rational?

LS: That could also happen, but there is no intrinsic compulsion for it. You know? In other words, you can have a highly educated and conscientious ruling body, yes?—say, the higher strata of the civil service. That you can have. And every child with a little bit of experience would know what is required for that. Hegel would say, I imagine, to teach these future high civil servants philosophy and history, and not public administration, because they will learn administration while they are in office. You know . . . this kind of thing? In other words, these are rather commonsensical reflections which every one of us could make. Yes? Crime of course will always exist, and it is clear that the existing law stands for this; and of course the laws must be enforced, and if the law enforcing agencies are of a tolerable degree of rationality they will enforce them. That men will be corrupt belongs to the sphere of accident. Now, as for the people, what will the simple man understand? That is perhaps part of your problem.

Student: Well, the major problem is whether the government will be rational, although it knows how to be. That is the problem I dealt with.

LS: Yes. First let me mention how Hegel thought of the rationality of the simple man. He would say that in his time the official guidance given to the simple people, especially the rural people, was through the parson, yes? And therefore it was the business of the state to take care that the divinity faculty is properly instructed, and that meant quite a few changes in the orthodox teachings. And this was the way in which it would come down,

because Hegel used the word "faith" or "confidence" as the characteristic of the masses of the people. They must be deferential to their betters, and their "betters" did not mean for Hegel the rich, but the more educated and the people with greater responsibility. That is the first condition.

Now the second condition . . . In a given situation, a government can be lax. You know? It can lack foresight and all this kind of thing. This can happen, but then they will be punished for it in very short order. There will be internal crises, there will be defeats; and this is the way in which things are restored. But there can no longer be any question as to what is the content of rationality, of right. It is now in principle settled.

To mention the two most important points for Hegel: the rights of man, which for Hegel includes a free choice of profession—there cannot be serfdom or anything like exclusion from any job through discrimination; and secondly—and this is the distinction between Hegel and the strictly speaking liberal doctrine—the government cannot be understood as a mere agent of the people. The government must have a right of its own. That meant for Hegel that there should be a monarchy so that the head executive does not owe his office to popular election. Precisely because the government is to embody rationality, it cannot be a mere reflection of the popular will. That this is not a simple question was showed from a democratic point of view, for example, in Lippmann's book on public philosophy.[ix] I don't know if you have seen it, but it is about what went wrong in foreign policy in the last thirty years, and it shows that too great a reliance on the popular will had made impossible a far-sighted foreign policy, especially where it is particularly grave; but this would in principle apply to domestic policy as well. These were the two pillars of Hegel's teachings.

The rights of man does not mean what they would mean according to Tom Paine: the extremely popular government. That would be incompatible with Hegel. It means, in a way, what Burke meant when he said that he had always been a friend to government—I have forgotten the exact formulation. That is a very emphatic expression. He meant by this: Don't tamper with the independence of government; government is an independent function which cannot be discharged by a simple reference to polls and so on.

Student: Well, Hegel, I suppose, sort of posits the goodness of man, because he supposes they will be rational on the whole, if they know the rational way.

LS: Hegel always rejected the view as sentimental that people are by nature good. They are not by nature good. But Hegel's view can perhaps be stated as follows: civilized men are good, or they are at least in a near potentiality of being good by virtue of the institution. If there is no law enforcement, and if there is laxity in high places, then men will become very bad in very short order. Hegel was not a sentimentalist. But that men can be rational and decent, Hegel regarded as sure, and I think this is not an outlandish proposition. He only says that to believe that men would ever do that without a proper training and education is impossible. Therefore, practically Hegel means that if the traditional religious feelings—which he did not have in exactly the same way that the

[ix] Walter Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy* (1955).

tradition had—would prevail in the masses of the population, that would be an absolutely indispensable condition, so that the people feel themselves responsible for what they do; and then the upper classes which are highly educated and enlightened. Then a truly rational society is possible. Temporary decay is always possible, and that is all right provided the system as a whole has within itself the principle of recovery. Hegel granted that. Differently stated, irrationality is from now on impossible, except in the form of crime; it is not possible in the form of principle. In all earlier societies, irrationality was necessary on the basis of principle: for example, slavery, to say nothing of other atrocities like cannibalism, were possible in former times non-criminally, on the basis of principle. But from now on, publicly defensible principle favors only rationality. Is this clear?

So this is not merely a psychological doctrine. Hegel would say that psychology wouldn't help in any way because people differ in different societies, and we have to be concerned with people as they are in a civilized society. Yes? That is a political problem, not a psychological problem of how a child born in a woods would develop. Of course, Hegel would say it would be a beast, no question about it, or like a beast, because he cannot strictly speaking be a human being. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Again, it would be . . . I mean, what revolution could there be? According to Hegel there could never be a revolution from now on which disestablishes the established order in virtue of a higher principle; it would only be an unambiguously criminal act.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Hegel would say that it wouldn't keep. I mean, there is a certain optimism of Hegel here, you can say. For example, in the discussions about Soviet Russia and the prospects of Soviet Russia, you find that people say however terrible this business may be now, it cannot last forever, because these people need science and technology, and this itself will make for freedom in the long run. This argument is in its structure Hegelian. So that the whole of society as it is now has the principle of its corrective in itself, and there can be temporary darkenings of all kinds but they can never maintain themselves because they have the consciousness, not of man as man, but of civilized Western man, against it.

By the way, the example of Russia is perhaps not so very good from Hegel's point of view, because Hegel thought of course that the lesser breeds would have to be thoroughly Europeanized before they could be depended upon. Yes? That in itself . . . yes, I think one could say that, that a thoroughly irrational policy is no longer possible. There can be relapses of all sorts, but they would contradict the conditions of the modern mind. You must have heard this argument millions of times. It was very popular. When people said, on a lower level, that there cannot be a First World War because it would be incompatible with the established financial system—and it did do some harm to the established financial systems, quite true—but the war happened nevertheless. There is a problem here, but not on the level of psychoanalysis, if I make myself understood. I mean the simple emotionalism of man, because that is not so crude. It is really a question of to

what extent a reached maturity of the public mind as embodied in institutions cannot be lost. Yes? And one is wise, perhaps, in having all kinds of misgivings in this respect. But stated in this form, on this level, the argument is unimpeachable. That there can be a complete abolition of the modern world . . . but this is then a complete relapse into barbarism; it can no longer be a higher stage. That he surely means, and that is in itself defensible. Yes? I mean that if Hegel has proved that the modern stage is a completion, then it follows by necessity on that. Yes?

Now there are some other remarks which are very important. When he speaks of Athens and Sparta and says that Athens is a richer and truer version of Greekness, here we can say he simply follows Thucydides in a somewhat simplistic understanding of Thucydides. I mean, there is nothing particularly interesting about it; he takes the funeral speech, literally understood, as a perfect expression of the Athenian spirit. We do not have to go into that.

There is a remark which is not in English at the end of the section on Athens, where he says:

> Art and science are the ideal, the spiritual manners in which the spirits of the nations become conscious of themselves, and the highest that a state can achieve is that art and science are cultivated in it and reach a height which is proportionate to the spirit of the people. This is the highest end of the state, which, however, the state itself cannot produce as its work—this flowering of science and art must generate itself by itself.[x]

In other words, it transcends the state. That is always in Hegel, and therefore the "deification" of the state is a misleading formulation. In this there is no difference between Hegel and Plato-Aristotle.

There are other passages . . . for example, page 265, paragraph 2. If you will read that.

Student: "The principle of corruption displayed itself first—"[xi]

LS: —Let us try to view that from a Greek point of view as distinguished from a Hegelian point of view. That will help us a bit in the understanding of Hegel. What is the classical, the Platonic-Aristotelian view of why the *polis* and not the nation is the true political unity? I mean, I hope no one believes that they simply took the *polis* for granted, like some social scientists today who simply take American democracy for granted. They thought about it, and they gave a reason which is still remarkable. People come back to it in strange ways. Why is the *polis* and not the nation or any other thing the right form of political unity? The nature of man! The *polis* is a human multitude sufficiently large to satisfy all the essential needs of man, and sufficiently small so as to remain surveyable. One can say this: a *polis* is a community in which everyone knows, not indeed everyone else, but an acquaintance of everyone else. So you never find yourself relying on an

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[x] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 628.
[xi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 265. The tape was changed at this point.

anonymous rumor: if you elect a man, you can find out about him with your own powers of cognition. Nature means, always, limit. For example, there is a limit to the growth of an elephant or whatever. The nature of a thing is the essential limitation of a thing. There must be, in the case of the *polis* at any rate, a sensible limit, accessible to the senses. Aristotle gives a beautiful example: if you have too large a multitude, your town crier must have a more than stentorian voice. In other words, no microphones available; your natural voice must be of sufficient size to reach everyone, and your eyes must be able to survey the thing. So Hegel would say that this was it: they were bound by nature, they did not transcend nature. The modern state, even the relatively small European state, was infinitely larger than the Greek *polis*. For Hegel there was unqualified progress, meaning spirituality, in the indirect form of communication. How do they call it now? Means of mass communication: press, television, and so on. There are means, of course—especially television, where you see the man in motion and he talks to you—to restore the immediacy which the Greeks wanted. In the problems of metropolitan administration and government this question comes up again. "The Lonely Crowd," as Riesman called it,[xii] is a consequence of the complete impossibility of true neighborhood once you go beyond a certain natural limit.

Now we could however draw the conclusion, which deviates a bit from Hegel, although it is compatible with Hegel, that nature is the concrete concept which is used for understanding the Greek *polis*. Now nature is precisely the key Greek concept. The Orientals did not have it. I say this with some hesitation because I know only one Oriental language, Hebrew, and I know only a little bit of that. But there is no word for nature in Hebrew, nor is there in Arabic either. They simply took it over from the Greek word for nature. In a conversation with a Hindu student, which took place many years ago, he used all these modern terms like sovereignty when speaking about Hindu things, and I didn't like that, so I cross-examined him and got this impression: the true sensual equivalent to what the Greeks meant by nature is a very well-known term, *dharma*, which is frequently translated to mean religion, and which has a much broader translation, as I learned from this man, which is "the way of a thing." And *dharma*, of course, is "the way of man." And since "the way of man" is a Hindu code, it therefore comes to mean religion. And in China, as Sinaiko is always trying to convince me, there is a word for nature, but I don't believe it is possible to find there. So nature is indeed a Greek discovery. One could admit this and still say that, while it is an enormous step beyond the absence of this notion, it is not enough, because we still have to understand the essential limitations of nature. And that is modern thought.

Now, as for the self-destruction of the Greek mind, Hegel indicates this as follows. Democracy as he understands it, the republican community—but of course with a need for leadership. That goes without saying. I mean, inequality of abilities is trivial. But how can you have leadership in a community of equally legal people? You can't command. How do you do it?

Student: You can elect leaders.

[xii] David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).

LS: Yes, but still . . . Say, for example, that you think a war is necessary, and even the leaders have no right to declare war?

Student: By persuasion.

LS: Speaking! Public speaking. And so it is necessary to have public debates: rhetoric, argument! Now that still finds its place in institutions, but it has in itself the tendency to become radicalized, to be argument not only about this or that measure—war or not war—but about the principles, the custom itself. And then? It is obvious that then doubt and decay follow. Let us see what he says about Socrates in this connection. That is on page 269, in the German on page 643.

Student: "And it was in Socrates that at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War . . . the inventor of morality."[xiii]

LS: You see, Hegel makes a distinction between morality and what he calls *Sittlichkeit*, which is a *customary* way of right action. Morality means that that the individual with his conscience takes full responsibility for what he does. So that is what he means when he says that Socrates is the inventor of morality. Yes?

Student: The Greeks had a customary morality, and Socrates undertook to teach them moral virtue, duty, etc. So then the moral man is not the one who wills to do that which is right, not the merely innocent, but the man who has the consciousness of what he is doing.

LS: Yes, that is right. Now that is the end of Greekness. It is the war which destroys Greece and leads over, after a tremendously roundabout way, to Christianity and to the modern world, which Hegel will build up in the next section. And then if you will turn to page 270, in the second paragraph, which is page 645 in the German, where he speaks of the fate of Socrates.

Student: "When Socrates wishes to induce his friends . . . that they must be pronounced guilty or innocent with him."[xiv]

LS: And in German he adds: "Both parties were right. Socrates did not die innocently [because he was guilty according to the principles of the valid morality—LS] Socrates did not die innocently—this would not be tragic, but only moving!" The tragic emerges out of the conflict of two opposite principles of right—that is Hegel's view. But his fate is tragic in the true sense. And now we come to a sentence which is very important: "Our state is entirely different from that of the Athenian people, since our state can be completely indifferent toward the inner life, even toward religion."[xv] That is the great paradoxy of the modern state, as Hegel sees it. It is based on the principle of subjectivity, of the infinite subjectivity, but because of this it does not control the subjectivity. In other

[xiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 269.
[xiv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 270.
[xv] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 646.

words—we have discussed this on a former occasion—the modern state is based on what one could call a "secularized Christianity." But this does not mean that the citizen of the modern state must be a Christian—this would contradict the very principle of that state. That is a great difficulty. This sentence is quite striking. You see how far Hegel was from any totalitarianism. That is absolute nonsense. For Hegel, totalitarianism was Robespierre, the inquiry into the intention of the individual: "Are you a hundred percent loyal?" You know? Virtuous, as Robespierre put it, and those who were suspect were already condemned. We come to that in the section on the French Revolution. Yes?

Student: But Hegel is totalitarian.

LS: How?

Student: It comes as a consequence that if you don't agree with the rational state . . . the laws are . . .

LS: But . . . Excuse me, but what does this mean? I mean, if you took that alone? For example, if you don't pay a certain tax because you think it is unfair, what happens to you in this country?

Student: There would be a trial.

LS: Sure! And you would be at least fined, and maybe more. That is everywhere. But there is no inquisition of any kind into your opinions. You are free to say this tax is unfair, and you may even promulgate it, but you have to obey the law. That is what Hegel means.

Student: Would conscientious objectors be permitted to . . .

LS: Hegel discussed that. You remember when he spoke of the Quakers in the introductory part? Hegel is a very practical man. He speaks of that, and he does not disapprove of the practice, but he makes a remark to the effect that the Americans and the English can *afford* it. In other words, if a state is sufficiently strong and sufficiently independent, if every man capable of bearing arms need not become an active soldier, then let's be liberal. Why not? But if it is not possible, if [the] fate of the society depends on it, then of course there is no conscientious objection. And may I say something wholly unauthorized and wholly unsupported by any evidence? I am absolutely sure that if the fate of the American people were at stake, everyone would have to become a combat soldier and there would be very few conscientious objectors. That is the point which Hegel makes. The mere subjective of Hegel[xvi] would say that there is such an overwhelming case for every man protected by the state to have an obligation to defend it that one can regard conscientious objection as a subjective whim which is even amiable but not something which is rationally defensible. The mere assertion that "my conscience hurts me" would not make any impression on Hegel. He would say "Show me your rational argument." And without that, the conscience is a mere plea. You know? An empty plea! That he would demand. But he would say that there are surely some people

[xvi] It is possible that there is something missing here. It is however as it appears in the transcript.

that do not take everything into consideration, and that they may be in many respects superior to their fellow citizens, and to tolerate them would be the humane policy. But if it was impossible on important grounds, then it cannot be! That, I think, he would say. I repeat this sentence: "Our state can be altogether indifferent as regards the inner life, even as regards religion." There is no possibility of any inquisition and any treatment on the basis of suspicion. You know? How do they call it? There is a name for that, which they used at the time of these great investigations. Hegel would be in favor of a strictly legal proceeding. Of course, the state is entitled from Hegel's point of view to say that certain parties or certain political pursuits are subversive and to outlaw them. Then it is a clear crime to belong to such a party. But the suspicion of crime cannot be made the on basis of the treatment of a person; there must be a clear legal case involving actions, possibly speeches, but certainly not intentions. Yes?

Student: If any state claims that it knows the absolute principles, such as Russia today, you cannot call it totalitarianism in these terms, can you?

LS: But the Russian state does not recognize a private sphere with which the state has nothing to do. If you do not go out and shout with them and join these mass parades, you are disloyal for that reason. No, there is an enormous difference.

Student: Well, I was just thinking of the organs of a rational state such as Hegel's. For instance, you did mention that the persons would have to be educated or re-educated in a certain way.

LS: Yes, but by reason alone! They may remain fundamentalists if they wish, but . . .

Student: But then they would not be state teachers, if they . . .

LS: Oh, yes they would. But Hegel would say that in the course of one generation the fundamentalists of the one hundred percent variety would go down, if they are exposed to reason. That is what he means. But if you want to be a hundred percent liberal, you will not find that anywhere on this globe. I mean, you find that in certain states like Prussia under William II, and the Third French Republic, but look how they ended. No, honestly, I think the enormous cleavage of parties, the hatred engendered there, had something to do with the impossibility of making propaganda for every cause without hindrance. There is a beautiful remark of Macaulay, which one cannot afford to overlook . . . I am not sure I remember it verbatim, but he speaks of what freedom of the press did to England. He said that prior to the emancipation of the press there was a very level—no obscenity, so to speak, in criticism of the government; and then he goes on to say that, at the moment the press became free, the purification of the literature began. What he means is this: either you have censorship, and then there will be evasion of the censorship and all kinds of immoral things will happen, because once the law is broken habitually, this is bound to have consequences in all quarters; or else the people have their censor in themselves, and then you don't need censorship.[xvii] But to have both the absence of internal censorship

[xvii] Strauss quotes the passage from Macaulay as an epigraph to his essay "On Tyranny": "The habit of writing against the government had, of itself, an unfavorable effect on the character. For

and the absence of an external censor, then crime . . . I believe that no example of this ever worked, and I believe one could give some contemporary examples of this: what is done with the word "art," for example, by certain individuals.

Now there is a remark on Aristotle in the translation, on page 272, paragraph 2, beginning. It is only a judgment by Hegel.

Student: "Alexander had been educated by the deepest and also the most comprehensive thinker of antiquity—Aristotle . . . was thoroughly refined and liberated—"

LS: May I translate that? It doesn't come out clearly in the translation. "Alexander had Aristotle for his teacher, the deepest and also most comprehensive thinker of antiquity—perhaps the deepest thinker, even in comparison with modern times."[xviii] That is important. Hegel doesn't mean that Aristotle was right—Hegel knows better than that—but it is a judgment on him: the modern Aristotle on the one hand, and Aristotle on the other, as far as quality of the individual is concerned. That is a remarkable statement. Originally he had a higher admiration for Plato, but that changed later on. I don't know whether you have ever seen a caricature of Aristotle—I know of one—I mean, I have seen portraits that make intelligible that statement even if one has never read a line of Aristotle.

Now there is one more passage which I think is important for our purposes on page 273, third paragraph. That is in the German on page 651.

Student: "Alexander had the good fortune to die . . . of Hellenic in existence."[xix]

LS: Now let us stop here. I think this is a very clear example of the limitations of Hegel's philosophy of history. His general thesis is that history is rational; but in order to maintain that, Hegel is compelled, just as the Marxists are, to make a distinction between the essential and the accidental. That there is in history things which are merely accidental, Hegel admits, just as Marx did; but the question, of course, is how to draw the line. Here we see an interesting example. If Hegel sees that all the characteristic Greek institutions—slavery, oracles, republics, manyness of cities, the Homeric gods—are all forming an essential unity, then he is admirable. One would have to check to see that in each case the item is really true, but his ingenuity in finding this necessity is not only unsurpassed but unrivaled. But here we have another example. A part of this Greekness as he understands it is this use of the human mind, and therefore it finds its expression in Achilles at the beginning of Greek culture and in Alexander at the end. Now in the case

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whoever was in the habit of writing against the government was in the habit of breaking the law; and the habit of breaking even an unreasonable law tends to make men altogether lawless . . . From the day on which the emancipation of our literature was accomplished, the purity of our literature began. . . " (Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, Revised and Expanded Edition, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael Roth [New York: The Free Press, 1991]), 22.

[xviii] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 649.

[xix] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 273.

of Achilles at the beginning, it makes some sense, because Achilles is a poetic figure and is therefore the work of the Greek mind. But the fact that Alexander died—I have forgotten of which disease—at age 32 or 33, and to link this up with the workings of the world mind, borders on superstition. There may be other examples, but this is of course a great difficulty in Hegel. This has great consequences, because what happened after Alexander depends entirely on the alleged necessity that Alexander died early. If you think of the parallel case—in one respect parallel—of the famous speculation on what would have happened in 1865 if Lincoln had not been assassinated, [1]and then one sees immediately that here is where accident enters. This fellow could have been a poorer shot, and then the whole history of the North and South might have been different. The same with Alexander! If Alexander had had progeny—a very able son, perhaps—one can't tell what the history of those next centuries would have been. As it actually was, this completely miserable condition of these mostly lousy individuals, that is by no means a "necessity," as he calls it.

There is also a remark on Plato's *Republic* which is not in the English. I don't know whether we have time to read it. At any rate, he contends that Plato's *Republic* is in one way a perfect presentation of Greekness. *Sittlichkeit*, which is not morality proper but an objective morality, without conscience, without particular freedom, was the principle of classical Greece; and Plato has presented his *Republic* with quite arbitrary consistency—therefore the abolition of property and family, and so on.[xx] And the last remark I would note occurs in the translation on page 276, at the beginning of the second paragraph. Do you have that?

Student: "But this particularity by which each Greek state . . . and of conflict with others."[xxi]

LS: That is all we want. You see that is again one of his attempts to show that the two most obvious things—Greek polytheism, the human gods, on the one hand; and the many cities, with each city, especially the most outstanding ones, with a peculiarity of its own—are based on the same principle. Spengler, I think, has done a lot to popularize this way of viewing cultures, and Hegel only does what Spengler does not do: he tries to show the inner necessity which connects all these elements.

Now to come back to the example of Alexander the Great, who had to die early lest Greece would not end with a youthful figure. Here you see the difference between Hegel and Herodotus, his model, very clearly. Herodotus also uses these images. In Herodotus there is always an awareness that he is giving meaning to what is itself accidental; and therefore what is done playfully by Herodotus is done with amazing seriousness by Hegel. Of course he lays himself open to criticism on these grounds.

Now next time we will hear a paper on Rome . . .

[xx] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 654.
[xxi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 276.

[1] Deleted “You know?”

Session 10: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —a very clear paper. The only difficulty I had concerned the last statement, the conclusion of your paper.[ii] I did not quite follow that.

Student: I was simply suggesting that if you wanted a way out of explaining how it came about that Rome had developed an excellent constitution and explaining it as a necessary development of previous world-historical culture, you could sort of get around that by calling it not chance but the founding of this constitution was a world-historical event, and calling its founders a world-historical people. I mean, this explains nothing, but . . .

LS: No, that wouldn't explain the connection. I mean if you have an intelligible development in Greece and an intelligible development in Rome but there is no intelligible connection between the two, then Hegel is finished. Is that clear? So that is absolutely crucial, and Hegel maintains there is a connection.

But there is a great difficulty here which comes out, in my opinion, with particular clarity in a passage which I will give you later. But first I would like to make a general remark about Hegel's treatment of Rome. You referred to the names of quite a few great thinkers prior to Hegel. I think that Gibbon, Montesquieu, and Machiavelli were the most important names. It is interesting that no names of similar importance came up in the earlier part. So prior to Hegel, Rome was a theme of political reflection on the highest level, much more so than Greece and Persia or anything else. We must of course not forget Judea, because that was always present in all theological considerations. But Hegel was not a theologian, that is why we limit ourselves to this remark. That is clear. And incidentally, if we were to look at the other writings of Hegel, especially his earlier writings, his youthful writings which he did not publish, we would see this still more—the great importance which Gibbon especially had on Hegel's formative years. Now what is the difference between Hegel on the one hand and Montesquieu and Gibbon on the other, very generally stated? The treatment of Rome? I mean, I am not now concerned with any details but with the overall "value judgment."

Student: You might say that Hegel underrates the value of Rome for the sake of the results.

LS: Well, that we do not yet know, but I would say that he certainly is not so enthusiastic about the Romans as Gibbon and Montesquieu in their way were. On the contrary, I don't remember that he used so much harsh language, if we disregard Africa, in any earlier section. That is only an impression of mine; it would have to be checked.

Now let us start from that. Can you understand that, that Hegel has a kind of animosity towards Rome which he certainly doesn't have against Greece or Persia, nor even against

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 9.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

India or China? I think it has something to do with the power of the admiration for Rome; and there was a very great event, the biggest fireworks that ever were, in which the admiration for Rome came to the fore. Do you remember?

Student: The French Revolution.

LS: Sure! The French Revolution, where all these Brutuses appeared, and you even see traces of it in this country if you look at the signatures of the Federalist Papers. How are they called? Publius and such names. So the admiration of Rome reached an apogee, one could say, in the eighteenth century. And there is one remark which is probably the strongest and which occurs in Rousseau somewhere, perhaps in the *Social Contract*, where he says that the Romans were the most virtuous, the most respectable nation that ever existed.[iii] Hegel's ideas opposed this. Why is this so? I mean, why did these people play up Rome to such a degree, these great eighteenth-century writers and many lesser eighteenth-century writers also? Incidentally, China also had a big press as you know in the eighteenth century, but it was not so close to home. Yes?

Student: There were two reasons: one is the Roman constitution, the Republican constitution; and the second is that it lasted so long.

LS: Sure, but what about Gibbon, who is probably the most famous documenter of Rome-worship in the eighteenth century? Rome was pre-Christian, don't forget about that. And then we see immediately what Hegel was doing. Whereas from the point of view of these old political writers, the pre-Hegelians, the Roman Empire had a lack of dualism between the power temporal and the power spiritual—tolerance allegedly, surely greater tolerance than in the eighteenth century, and intolerance stems from the Jews and migrates to the Christians—this kind of notion that Voltaire developed. Now what Hegel has been trying to show is this: that what you regard as a decline compared with Rome, whether Republican or imperial, is in fact the preparation only for what is to come, and it is the necessary preparation for the greatest part of human history: Christianity. Not that Hegel is one hundred percent satisfied with the origin of primitive Christianity that will appear, but the true history of Christianity begins after Rome, and not during Rome.

Now this complexity that Rome, while being so admirably political as many had said before, was at the same time responsible for Christianity. Not that Christianity came in as an enemy, but that it had to come in, had to be fitted into that. One of these Romanists that Hegel knew so well had said this before, and that was much earlier. One cannot read—at least I cannot read—this part without thinking about one chapter of Machiavelli's *Discourses*, book 2, chapter 2, which contains a violent attack on Rome, on pagan Rome—and you know the book is written in praise of Rome. Why? The Romans destroyed all freedom, all possibility of republican life, for 1500 years. And Machiavelli of course thinks of a connection between this destruction . . . In Machiavelli's perspective it looks like this. The home of freedom was Europe—look at the many free tribes which Caesar had to subjugate in Gaul and Sicily and so on—and now all this was destroyed by

[iii] In book 4, chapter 4 of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau refers to the Romans as "the freest and most powerful people on earth."

Rome; and Rome was an Oriental despotism in the West, and therefore—these are not terms used by Machiavelli, but it amounts to this—Rome introduced Eastern servility into the originally free West. And for Machiavelli this means that this servility of the West prepared the way for the biblical religions, which in Machiavelli's eyes are the opposite of human freedom. Now Hegel, I am sure, has understood that; and he says that this is true in a way but Machiavelli doesn't understand that it is precisely Christianity that contains the germs of true freedom, of a freedom which could only appear in a situation in which the extreme servility existed. Hegel must then prove that Roman servility, the servility introduced by the Roman emperors, the absolute servility, is a deeper servility than that which we find in India, China, and elsewhere. That is the point.

Now that is the background of Hegel; but Hegel tries to prove something, and therefore we cannot just assume these things which Hegel had learned. Again he has to look at Rome empirically. What are the massive data regarding Rome[1] which Hegel will show are necessarily connected with each other in order then to show that they are necessarily connected with the previous as well as the later history of mankind? Now what are these massive data? That is Hegel's point: no subtleties like the discoveries of clever individual scholars, but massive facts which are remembered by mankind in general. Now what are these massive facts? Let us remind ourselves of Greece: no national unity, only spiritual unity, Homer and the gods, the national games, many *poleis*, and of course art, science, and philosophy. Now what are the massive facts about Rome which you would find in every course, however small, however superficial—in fact, the more superficial the better—on Western civilization? When the fellow lets loose on Rome, what will he mention?

Student: The Senate?

LS: That is one part of the story, yes. The Roman constitution would be the more general thing. But still, senates you find elsewhere, so it must be something more specific. What do you mean by senate? The institution by itself is not a characteristic which is peculiar to Rome.

Student: But it seems to have been more firmly empowered.

LS: Say that Rome was the most political nation, yes? All right, we need general formations. Good.

Student: One fact that is stressed is that it brought peace for a good number of centuries. Its all-embracingness.

LS: Yes. That means of course that it is a great political achievement to establish an empire. So in other words, the political history of Rome is much more impressive from the point of view of magnitude than that of Greece, and so Rome was a political nation *par excellence*. I think it is sound common sense to say that in the history that we know, the Romans and the British are impressive from the point of view of political

achievements, as long as they lasted. And certainly Rome is the more impressive in virtue of the extent of that empire, both in time and space. And then what else?

Student: Budding Christianity.

LS: Yes. That is a little beyond Rome, but pagan Rome, surely.

Student: The army is in the political?

LS: Yes, the Roman polity is unthinkable without the Legion. That would belong with the political. But what are the most massive things?

Student: The use of the army for engineering work.

LS: That is also part of the political. I mean quite superficial things. If people speak of things which make the modern world, they speak of the Bible, then they speak of Greek science and art . . .

Student: Roman law.

LS: Roman law. And what does Roman law mean here chiefly, although not exclusively? Not so much public law as private law. Yes? Law about property and marriage and this kind of thing. Although public law also played a role, certainly; but[2] [private] law was the chief thing on top of what Hegel thinks. Now what about the gods? Hegel states this very neatly and simply. Well, in the first place you have these famous gods which you also have among the Greeks, only they have different names. But they are not the peculiar Roman gods. So what are the peculiarly Roman gods?

Student: Allegorical things like . . .

LS: Prosaic! "Prosaic," as Hegel puts it. He gives somewhere an instance of this: Roman religion lacks the artistic lustre of the Greeks. Prosaic. That is another point. Now I mention the games, public games. What is the characteristic of the Roman public games in contradistinction to the other name of public games, the Greeks?

Student: They were spectators.

LS: Yes. In other words, there was no Olympia where the best of the younger generation participated. But what kind of things were the Roman games?

Student: Bloodthirsty.

LS: Yes. Hegel uses this one contrast of the Greek tragedy and the gladiators, where the gladiators were torn to pieces by lions and other beasts. They were very low and cruel compared with the nobility of the Greeks.

Then there is another point—I mean of the most superficial things. Hegel of course to some extent relied upon the historians, the Roman historians, but also on those Greek historians who knew the Romans, and especially Polybius, to whom he refers most frequently. Now what struck Polybius as particularly Roman in contradistinction to Greek? That is another element, and it also concerned Livy, so there is some truth in it.

Student: Is this the formal piety?

LS: Yes, but let us just say piety. The Romans were emphatically pious, more pious than the Greeks. The whole *Aeneid* of Virgil is based on that idea. And the Romans had oaths: the "sacredness of the oath," there are so many stories about that, much more famous stories than you have among the Greeks. The word *religio* is a Roman word, it doesn't exist in any other language, and Hegel uses a modern term in order to bring that out: "conscience." One could say "conscientiousness." The famous figures of Republican Rome are characterized by conscientiousness as conscientiousness, which is not true of Greece. If you think of comparable Greek figures like Aristides, he was revered as a just man; there was no emphasis on his piety in particular. The man who was famous for his piety among the Greeks was Nicias, who was somewhat sad; but at any rate, he didn't belong to the top drawer, he was a person deserving compassion. Aristides stands out; the "Just Aristides" was something different. And then of course you only have to read Livy to see that the Romans would never wage a war on purely political grounds; there must be a religious reason for it. And there are fantastic stories told about this. For example, after the Caudinian disaster, the consul makes a peace with the Samnites which[3] [is] unfavorable to Rome, naturally, and the Romans regarded this as a binding promise. Yes? The consul was entitled to do that! And no one thought of the Machiavellian reaction, that it was a peace which was made under duress and therefore not valid. That was not possible; it was a sworn peace and it had to be kept. But the consul felt that it was not good for Rome and wanted to get out of this predicament, so he asked the Romans to send him back to the Samnites, and he told them he was a Samnite and no longer a Roman, and then he struck the Roman soldier who had brought him there. That made a cause for another just war. Then it was okay.[iv] You don't find this kind of clever thing among the Greeks. You find all kinds of immoral and brutal actions, but you don't find this elaborate religious technique which was subjectively, in many cases, very sincere.

Hegel also refers to the case of the patricians and the plebeians, where it so happens that religion favors the patricians. And since the plebeians had no access to the cult, they could not become consuls or take any other public offices. That was too bad for the plebeians, but the patricians had to be pious. I think it is wrong to believe that the patricians were simply hypocrites. That was Machiavelli's view, more or less, but I think the view of Longinus was truer to the facts in his very sympathetic description of that whole religion. But again, formalism, "pious formalism," as Hegel calls it, was the point.

[iv] In book 9 of his *History of Rome*, Livy describes the Samnites' defeat of the Romans at Caudine Forks in 321 B.C. and the subsequent attempt by the consul, Spurius Postumius, to get out of the humiliating peace agreement.

And of course the great fact that Roman science hardly existed. And the fact that Roman art is of Greek inspiration; however great it is in itself, it is based on Greek inspiration. These are the massive facts from which Hegel starts. And then he has to show the inner connection between them, and then at the end, he has to show the connection between Greece on the one end and modernity on the other.

Now I agree with the impression that the connection has not been made quite clear by Hegel in these lectures, but one must of course say that this discussion here [of] the *polis* of Rome, the Roman Empire, and the transition to Christianity is a central part of Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind*, where it is done with utmost precision[v] . . . We must never forget that we are reading lectures by Hegel, not a book by him.

Now if you turn to page 288, in the German on page 673, you see the difference which was stated in the paper which was given today. It is in the middle of the page. Do you have that?

Student: "It may be asked . . . world spirit which was just ready for development."[vi]

LS: In other words, if you take this as an answer, then it is clear that there are two entirely accidental things, merely linked by "ands," with the very formal and abstract statement regarding the essential connections. And that, of course, is absolutely against the spirit of Hegel's philosophy as a whole. He somewhere says, speaking of enumeration, "In 'this and also that' philosophy rejects this 'also,'"[vii] meaning that you have to show[4] [how] it necessarily comes in and not merely enumerate, which is impossible. Surely. But Hegel of course does not merely leave it at that; that is only a very provisional formulation of the problem. Hegel would say this: Surely there are other robber states, but in Rome this robber origin—you know the story told by Livy that Rome was originally a coming together of robbers and an asylum for robbers—makes sense, because out of this particular robber state there emerged a state which, by virtue of some other accidents, could become the ruler of the whole inhabited world; and so this robber element took on world-historical significance for the first time. Now we must see how this took place.

Now what does that mean? Robbers merely at the beginning? Simply some gang or gangs which simply united for robbing the neighboring peoples, stealing their women and cattle and so on? And how does this go on from here? Now a settlement is created which is fairly strong because of the toughness of these gangsters. And then—[viii]

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[v] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 6.A.c, "Legal Status."
[vi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 288.
[vii] Though I cannot locate this exact quote, Hegel exposes the contradictions involved in the identification of a thing through the enumeration of its properties in the *Phenomenology*, pars. 111-31.
[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

—these people. Let us call them plebeians. So the distinction between the patricians and the plebeians existed in Rome in a way in which it did not exist in Greece. Why?

Now we make a jump, and perhaps we must leave it at a jump—we must see. What was empirically the decisive difference from the point of view of the Romans between the patricians and the plebeians at the beginning? Well, the plebeians were people without religion; and let us tentatively say that the Roman plebs was the first human multitude without religion. They had their superstitions and so on, that goes without saying, but the place of religion goes to subjection to the patricians. And the Roman plebs, as it were, is an anticipation of the fate of all subjects to the Roman emperors. Now how can we understand this step by step? Yes?

Student: Doesn't [Fustel de Coulanges][ix] claim that some stages of Greek history had parts of the population that were in the same way, more or less, excluded from the public religion?

LS: Yes. You see, I know very little about that, but you must not forget that there were also the mystery cults, which were not so much affairs of the *polis*, and they may very well have played a great role as far as . . . But the main point is that in Athens there were also patricians. They were called *eu-patridai*, the people stemming from good fathers, the well-fathered people. But what does this mean? This was a kind of social distinction which had no political or sacred meaning at all. In Sparta, you also had a distinction between the more noble and the less noble, but you don't have the clear-cut case of patrician and plebs for many centuries, as you do in Rome. You have conflict between the rich and the poor, but that is a different story.

Student: But these periods are not comparable periods between Greek and Roman history. This was the undeveloped period in Rome, and you are comparing the early days in Rome with a later stage in Greece.

LS: I am aware of this difficulty, bet let us try to follow Hegel. Hegel takes simply the Greek *polis* as historical, i.e., as reported, in both cases. Now the conflict between the patricians and the plebeians is based on the fact that the plebeians have no access to the sacred things of the city of Rome. Yes? And this has no parallel in Athens or Sparta. That is the crucial point. Whether a closer study on the basis of new discoveries through archaeology would alter the picture is a general difficulty for Hegel. He takes an image as it arises from the tradition, from the transmitted things, and holds that these images are truer than any discovery which an individual scholar may make. That is his general method throughout the book. Of course his method is more defensible in the case of the Greeks and Romans than it is in the case of the Babylonians and the Egyptians, where the real deciphering began after Hegel. Hegel would say, for example, to read Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, the three key Greek historians, in which the conflict between the patrician and the plebeians does not play a big role, whereas in Rome you only have to read Livy to see that it went on all the time. And Polybius too, for that matter. That is a

[ix] In *The Ancient City* (1864), French historian Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges demonstrated the important role that religion played in the social and political evolution of Greece and Rome.

manifest and striking fact, the exclusion of a considerable part of the inhabitants from public office on grounds of religion, and not because they have a different religion—that would be another story—but there is no consideration because as far as the law is concerned they have no religion. Here he simply follows the picture given by Livy especially. Yes?

Student: Does this compare with the Brahmins and the Pharias[x]?

LS: It has something to do with that. I think he quotes somewhere a remark about Sudras in India. But it does not lead to the extreme thing that a plebeian cannot touch a patrician or anything like that. But it has a similarity, yes.

Now where were we in out attempt to understand this robber origin? This state has a part which in itself has no access to religion. The subjects of the patricians, the owners of the sacred things. The subjection of the plebeian to the patrician has, as far as the plebeians are concerned, no other ground except force, domination. It is a society based on force, to a much higher degree than the other states were where, however much force they used in fact, there was a religious justification which was less clear than in Rome. Rome becomes the conquering nation *par excellence*. It conquers the whole inhabited world. All the republican institutions become obsolete by virtue of this enlargement, and in the end we have the emperor as the sole possessor of political power—supported by the Praetorians, of course, but the emperor is at the top. In this situation Hegel doesn't speak of "emperor worship" at all; we are chiefly concerned with the fact that there is no longer a specifically Roman religion because of the synchronism of all the religions of the Roman Empire which migrate to Rome. What binds the individual citizen of that time is mere force of a master. An individual may have personal feelings of loyalty on a religious or other basis, but that is no longer important, is no longer the principle of the thing.

And what is the content of the life of the citizen under the emperors? Well, Hegel's assertion is that under the Empire there was for the first time a preponderance of private life. The subjects were not slaves; although there were slaves there, the subjects were private men, safe in principle in their private sphere. That is to say, safe because of the law, the private law, but strictly speaking only as far as property was concerned. Private property owners that were under an absolute master. This despotism is radically different from all other despotisms because there is no longer any spiritual force to which the whole society bows. It is not the degree of oppression which is decisive but the grounds of the oppression. The grounds of oppression were entirely that of mastery, nothing more.

And now, before we look at this situation of the emperors which is decisive in this whole thing, we must see whether we can understand Hegel's transition from early Rome to imperial Rome—I mean the principles of this transition. It is not necessary that we consider the particular points which Hegel emphasizes because this is not the most authoritative statement which Hegel makes on this subject. Let us try to understand for ourselves. Let us start from the fact that Rome was a *polis* originally and disregard the robber element, although that was another point of great importance. What is the

[x] This is as it appears in the transcript.

peculiarity of the *polis* as compared with the Oriental system, to say nothing of Africa? Well, Africa means that the subjective will is in control; there is not something to which men bow—the "objectivity," Hegel calls it. That is Africa. In the Orient there is something to which men bow, the "objectivity," but precisely because there is *only* the objectivity to which men bow, there is strictly speaking despotism, meaning simple submission to that objectivity; whether that is understood as the Chinese Heaven or the Indian Brahma does not make such a difference. What is the peculiarly Greek thing, compared with those others? Well, in the objectivity itself the humanity appears, the human gods. They are really idealized human beings, no longer half-beasts or an unarticulated substance. This is the stage which was reached by Greece, and to some extent it was the situation in Rome. The real construction would be required to show how the Greek order of necessity led to the Roman order. The humanity peculiar to the Greeks also shows itself in the fact that since humanity now appears in the objectivity, in the divine, the human gods, there is freedom now in the human beings themselves, in the subjects. The virtue of the custom of the city is that the citizen has a direct access to the objectivity. That is a very crude formulation of what we discussed last time. Now how do you come from here to Rome? Hegel developed this at great length in the *Phenomenology*,[xi] but I cannot now give you the precise statement. I must skip many stages. Yes?

Student: This may be beside the point, but in the Greeks he mentioned the sophists bringing in the clear realization that men make the laws and that this wasn't fully realized while things were going smoothly and that this realization was part of the breakdown. Didn't Rome fully realize that man makes the law?

LS: Yes, that is true. But Hegel brings in the end of Greece only when he speaks of the Roman Empire. Then he refers to the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Skeptics, and later on to Christianity. But there, for Hegel's purposes it is sufficient to show that the end of Greece, the destruction of the objectivity as the Greeks understood it, and the first emancipation of the subjectivity is the point where Rome takes over. Yes, very true. But Hegel has also to show how this stage in Rome was prepared by an inner development in Rome which was different from the Greek development. Do you see the point? And I think the only way to do this is by showing a dialectic of the *polis*. I can really only give one indication of this. The *polis*—and this was made very clear in his *Phenomenology*[xii]—is in a very emphatic sense, more emphatic than in any Oriental society, a war-waging society, perhaps in the sense that here the citizen body is involved rather than the dictation of some despot. But if the *polis* reaches its peak, as far as its consciousness is concerned, in war, which is of course meant to be victorious war, then there is no possibility in the long run of coexistence of many cities. There is no principle of confederation of the city as city available, because of the autonomy of the *polis*. This has in itself the possibility of super-*polis* which reduces all other *poleis* to subjection. And this possibility is realized by Rome. I believe something of this sort would be needed, and it is implied in what Hegel says about the emphasis of mere power in Rome.

[xi] Again see Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 6.A.c, "Legal Status."
[xii] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 6.A.b, "Ethical Action," pars. 475-76.

However this may be, at the end of the process, once the super-*polis* has destroyed all other *poleis*—and, needless to say, all other relics of monarchies that still existed—then there is a situation in which the *polis* as *polis* is also internationally destroyed. There can no longer be a citizen body which is as it were the repository or the objectivity of the belief in the gods. Then we have indeed—and this is prepared in the decay of Greece, as you rightly say, and especially in Socrates—the existing objectivity being dissolved by reflection. Then the subject becomes sovereign. But Socrates still lived in a *polis*, and Socrates was still a citizen and a victim of the *polis* at the same time.

In the final stage in Rome, you have the subject confronted no longer by the *polis* but by the master, by the universal master, the emperor. The whole world has become meaningless; all meaning now resides in private life. This is the life of the private property owner, what Hegel calls the "*bourgeois*." There is a distinction which was made first by Rousseau, I believe, between the *bourgeois* and the *citoyen*, whereas the terms were ordinarily used synonymously. A *citoyen* is a member of a republican community like Athens, Sparta, or Rome; and a *bourgeois* is the subject of an absolute monarch. And the *bourgeois* is characterized by the complete privacy of his life; he doesn't fight for his country; he doesn't protect his country; and of course he doesn't participate in the political activity of his country. Hegel makes a very illuminating remark about that. He says that the principle of the *bourgeois* is the fear of violent death. That is Hegel's way of stating things precisely. Because he is not a soldier, he cannot bear arms; he does not expose his life to violent death. His principle is fear of violent death. You see, Hegel states in one phrase the connection between the institutional characteristics of the regime and Hobbes's doctrine. [In] Hobbes's doctrine, a society [is] based on the fear of violent death; and there is no possibility of . . . Enlightened despotism is of course also despotism, an exclusion of the citizen body from political responsibility, which includes fighting for the country. Now Hegel says this is not an invention of modern times; it is implied already in the Roman Empire. And the Roman law, as developed in the Imperial period, lays the foundation for this kind of existence.

So we have then in the Roman Empire a situation in which man can find his satisfaction only in his private life. Public life is a sheer desert and is completely rotten; whether there are some good emperors instead of bad doesn't make any fundamental difference because it is mere accident; the system as such is completely rotten. There are two ways in which this private life can be led: the strictly selfish life of the property owner, and the life of the philosopher. But that philosophy is of a peculiar kind, namely, Stoic, Skeptic, or Epicurean. And how does he understand the unity between these three? They are non-political. The solution of the human life is found entirely in the private life of thought which is divorced from any concern for the *res publica*. And if one should say that you find this already in Plato and Aristotle, Hegel would say that this was because it was already the beginning of the end of the *polis*, and it becomes fully developed in these post-Aristotelian doctrines.

Now let us understand that. There is no longer the mere subjective will that has known nothing of objectivity, as there was in Africa. In other words, it is not mere savagery; this is an end product of a process of civilization, and the people who live in it have this in

their bones whether they are aware of it or not. It is a resignation, and not an original state. Yes?

Student: Would it be a distortion to say that the objectivity in this state is really one's subjectivity?

LS: No, I believe that would be very necessary to say. Let us even use terms which are not so highfalutin'. You have here a state of affairs in which you have the mass of individuals, atoms, in which the difference between a slave and a free man doesn't mean anything because the emperor may be fond of a slave which, if emancipated, may have infinitely more power than the man from the noblest family. So there are atomic individuals, and then there is one individual who is the only reflection of objectivity which is left, a human being, and a rather worthless human being, let us say. In Africa this doesn't exist; they are all savages and don't look up to anything. These people don't look up, strictly speaking, to the emperor, but that is somehow the only thing which makes their lives possible. To that extent objectivity still exists, but the objectivity is now obviously nothing but a human being. Neither in China nor India nor Greece, nor in early Rome did such a thing exist. But while this is the greatest degradation, it also gives a hint as to the truth. If we call the objectivity, that to which men bow, by the very ambiguous term "God," then the solution is that God has become man, which is the Christian doctrine; and then the Roman Empire is a caricature of that truth. The place of the gods is now taken by a human being. That is the highest; we can never go higher. And now here, of course, Hegel could refer to emperor worship, although I think that he never does refer to it in fact. Emperor worship was an obligation under the Roman Empire. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Because that is the truth, in his opinion.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: That is a pagan objection, Hegel would say. Or that would be his theological objection—his philosophical reply would be that you underrate man! Man, this visible being with legs and nose and ears, is the only possible place in which God can become fully God. That is what Hegel says. To use some provisional expressions, man is the temple in which God alone can reside in his full manifestation. Once you make this distinction between the non-sensible and the sensible, as you do now, you assert there is a dualism, which simply stated means there is a divine, the intelligible, and the godless, the sensible. What is all-important, Hegel says, is to see that the godless, the merely sensible, is a part of God. It is the opposite of God, Hegel says, but this opposite is a part of God. The "substance," to use a term which Hegel uses, necessarily distinguishes itself within itself between, say, the intelligible and the sensible. Yes? So that they become opposites at first glance; but the full understanding of God would be that God is the unity of both, the being in which this unity is fully realized. That being is both intelligible and sensible; and that is man. Hegel's objection to Greek anthropomorphism is that it was not anthropomorphic enough. The gods looked like human beings, but they were not human

beings; they did not die. God died according to the Christian doctrine; he became fully man. That is the Christian doctrine. And this is prepared by the decay of antiquity, as culminating in the Roman Empire. This is what he have to understand now.

We have reached this point where men cannot find any satisfaction in public life, let us say in social life, because social life is complete rottenness. The only satisfaction can be found either in the life of a property owner, or else in the life of the later thinkers, Skeptic, Stoic, and Epicurean. Yes, but they find satisfaction, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Skeptics. There are stories about the terrible pain they have: they are compelled to take poison because the emperor wants it, and they have to do it; they don't rebel, they are not bitter, they are reconciled. But Hegel thinks that this is a defect, that they are satisfied with such an essentially unsatisfactory situation. A deeper reflection would transform the self-satisfaction of the private man into the utmost dissatisfaction with his private life. And what is this dissatisfaction with privacy? It is called sin, the consciousness of sin. Because what does sin mean? It means the awareness of the separation from God. These people are really God-forsaken, these property owners and late philosophers. They are God-forsaken but they don't know it.

Here is where Judea comes in. The Jews knew that, and the Jews were the only ones who knew it according to Hegel, not the Greeks. The Jews knew that God is mind, and only mind, pure mind. And because they knew that, they became aware of the radical gulf between man and God in a way in which no other people had been aware of it. And to become aware of this means to be aware of one's lowness, ultimately of one's sinfulness, and of the desire for redemption. The longing for redemption becomes the overwhelming power. But this, Hegel says, has not been fully realized by the Jews because they were satisfied with the particularistic notion, namely, that God is the God of the Jews, and redemption consists in the restoration of the Jewish faith. In other words, the depth of the problem was not seen to be man as man. But here in the Roman Empire, where we have these God-forsaken people, the decisive step was to become aware that privacy means to be cut off from the absolute, from the substance—the awareness of sin. So Judaism became world-historical only under Augustus in the Roman Empire. Prior to that it was one possibility, with great potentiality but no more. And in theological terms, when the time had come . . . What is the word for that?

Student: In the fullness of time?

LS: Yes. But Hegel says what these pious people had said all the time: that this should happen under Augustus, and that he could show why this had to be. My analysis of the state of the human mind under the Roman Empire shows that it was obviously necessary. Hegel does not go so far as to say that he can prove that it had to be the son of Mary who was married to Joseph. That belongs to the accidental. But that it has to be a Jew, and a Jew born in this particular time, is absolutely intelligible; and that, you can say, is the core of the rationality of history.

Now the other things which are the sequel to the philosophy of history will simply show that the origin of Christianity, the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, were the

beginnings, but only the beginnings. The Apostles already added something crucially important. Hegel here opposes the old-fashioned liberals, who said that it was, first of all, the text of the Bible, and secondly, the text of the Gospel, rather than that of the Apostles, which reveal primitive Christianity. Hegel says primitive Christianity was not good enough, because what came after the Crucifixion was the true doctrine of the Christianity, namely, that God had to die. God was a true human being and had to die. That was decisive. But even the stage of Apostolic Christianity was not sufficient; it was only the beginning, because here you have the reconciliation of the Christian, of man who has become Christian, with God but not with the world. A Christian has to be otherworldly. The reconciliation means that man has become reconciled to the extent that he has become otherworldly. The full reconciliation is when the world itself becomes Christian, and that is a long process of civilization, and especially of the Reformation, and ultimately of the French Revolution. The secularization of Christianity means here something subtly different in that it means the permeation of the world by Christianity and also the commonsense meaning of the term, where theological doctrines become rational doctrines; that is, they cease to be theological doctrines. As long as Christianity is only believed in, it is not the true Christianity. As long as Christianity is only an authoritative doctrine, it is not yet true Christianity. Now the transition is made by the Reformation; it is not the authority of the Church which vouches for the true.

Student: You are stealing all my thunder!

LS: No, you will have plenty of thunder. But we have to look forward. This point we are discussing now is really the axis of the whole work. Hegel is much briefer on the later history not because he did not regard it as important but because this is one of the failings of professors. Hegel was a professor, after all, and he took so much time at the beginning that he did not have the time to speak with equal detail about the end. That is really true that this happens generally, and Hegel is no exception.

Now there are some passages which are especially important. Only one little thing: you didn't say anything about Byzantium, the Byzantine Empire, in your report. What does the Byzantine Empire mean in Hegel's construction, do you remember?

Student: Well, I think the principal point he made was that an already civilized society was not a proper breeding ground for Christianity.

LS: Yes.

Student: Because there was already a secular structure set up, to which Christianity adopted itself, more or less. It fit too easily.

LS: Whereas in the West?

Student: In the West, Christianity was able to become a foundation, an ingredient of a developing culture.

LS: In other words, in the West Christianity put its stamp on previously unstamped people. Could we say that? They were raw material, these Northern European people, and therefore Christianity could sink much more deeply; whereas in Byzantium, where there was a seed of civilization, the impact of Christianity was much more weak and all this savagery and rottenness continued. I wouldn't be surprised if some pan-Slavist of the nineteenth century would have accepted this, with the modification that this is where "Holy Mother Russia" comes from—there the Byzantine Christianity came across by an unwritten leaf and, like the Germans in the West, it could put its stamp on it and form it from the beginning. I would assume that some . . .

Student: Isn't there something in the Bible about new wine in old skins?

LS: One should not do that, yes.

Student: The Byzantine Christianity illustrates that.

LS: Yes, but Hegel did not quote these words. Hegel did not refer to that Old Testament verse, but it makes perfect sense to use it. Now as for Hegel's construction, how does he interpret the "Fall"? Here he makes a point which . . . We can read that perhaps on page 321, middle.

Student: "Of this spirit, we have the mythical . . . a park where only brutes, not men, can remain—"[xiii]

LS: Here he uses the Greek translation; in Hebrew it was a garden. The Greek translation was "paradise," which is an animal park. Hegel plays on that. You see that Hegel is not absolutely orthodox.

Student: "For the brute is one with God only implicitly . . . separation from the universal and divine spirit."[xiv]

LS: Do you understand that? I mean, I can close myself up in my self-consciousness, I can call everything before the tribunal of my reason. Why should I do this, or why should I do that? That is the "infinity of the subject." Only men can do that. But at the same time, by raising these same questions it is obvious that this is the act of rebellion. Yes? Only men can ask why they should do something, and Hegel says men must do it. While in itself it is the height of criminality, it is also the origin of humanity, because only by raising that question can man become self-consciously good. That is so. No innocence is possible. No innocence! Innocence is subhuman. That is the way in which Hegel accepts the biblical tradition. We must become guilty if we are to become good. This is a very dangerous formulation, which can lend itself to all kinds of misuse by silly people—and perhaps not always by silly people—and Hegel says that the pagans never understood that. Yes?

[xiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 321.
[xiv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 321.

Student: "If I hold my abstract freedom . . . God confirms the words of the serpent."[xv]

LS: You see, the serpent did not simply tell a lie when it said they would become like Gods, knowing good and evil; man did become like God, knowing good and evil.

Student: "Implicitly and explicitly, then, we have the truth . . . in the first instance, only for God."[xvi]

LS: In other words, this is according to Hegel the status of the Old Testament.

Student: "As far as the present is concerned . . . and atonement made by outward offerings—"[xvii]

LS: We don't have to go into the rest. In other words, the Old Testament solution is not satisfactory because it does not concern man as man, and this transition is made in Christianity. It is made by the fact that man as man has become, without knowing it, the absolute sinner, completely private, divorced from any absolute. But these pagans don't know that they are sinners; they had to be told that they were sinners. That is the meaning of the Evangelic teaching of repentance. But something in them made them responsive to that call, and then by this very fact they became Christians. The Christian, in other words, understood that the satisfaction of the ancient philosophers in their own thought was not true satisfaction. True satisfaction requires the reconciliation of man and the world. The world means here society, *res publica*. And the full satisfaction was founded originally by Christianity. The fulfillment was possible only when a fully satisfactory state, a state satisfactory for man as man, became possible by virtue of the regime of Christianity. And that means, in simple terms, states which are consciously founded on the "rights of man." And this was accomplished in Europe in the French Revolution, and of course in America thirteen years earlier.

We should also have a look at a passage a bit later, page 323 in the English, and page 734 in the German.

Student: "But what is spirit? It is the one and immutably . . . which essentially characterizes it as spirit."[xviii]

LS: In other words, this difference in its unity is the spirit. The Father is one pole, the Son is the other pole, and there is a union of the two in the Holy Ghost—but Hegel omits the "Holy." That is the spirit, the mind. Yes?

[xv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 321-22.
[xvi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 322.
[xvii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 322.
[xviii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 323-24.

Student: "It must further be observed that in this truth . . . a constituent element in the Divine Being."[xix]

LS: Of God, you see. Now that is what no one understood before Christianity according to Hegel, that the infinite mind, the human mind, is itself a moment, a phase in the inner organism or movement of God. So the divinization of man, or the humanization of God, however you want to phrase it, is what he means. Yes?

Student: "Man himself therefore is comprehended . . . with God is posited in the Christian religion."[xx]

LS: May I translate this more literally? "Thus man himself is contained in the concept of God,"[xxi] and this being contained may also express itself so that Hegel knows that these are not simply authentic interpretations of the Christian dogma. He idealizes the Christian dogma so that it fits what he regards as the truth. I read on page 324, where there occurs a passage which shows this very neatly. No, it is not in the English, I think, but he makes this remark: "It was hence necessary that God had to reveal himself in human shape."[xxii] What was traditionally regarded by Christian theology as the mystery of faith, Hegel now sees as evidently necessary. There is no longer any seeing through a glass darkly by faith; he understands the truth of Christianity perfectly. In the language where we make use of the distinction between faith and knowledge, *pistis* and *gnosis*, we must say that Hegel is agnostic, meaning a Christian who no longer believes but who knows, who has seen the truth. And this seeing the truth is of necessity a transformation of the truth. The real proof of Christianity is Hegel's *Logic* or *Phenomenology of Mind*; and once you have understood them, you no longer need the Bible or the authority of the Church. And therefore Hegel could say somewhere, I believe in a letter, that the reading of the daily newspaper is the civilized man's morning prayer.[xxiii] That is the practical consequence of his thesis. Of course he does not any longer pray. He knows, and what he has to do is to act on the basis of his knowledge, meaning he must be a good citizen, a responsible citizen; and a responsible citizen has to be informed and he can be informed by the morning paper. So in other words, one can say with equal right that Hegel was a Lutheran Christian and also no longer a Christian. It all depends: both are true, and in a way both are false, and that Hegel's school immediately split itself into a right Hegelian wing and a left Hegelian wing means that no one except Hegel himself could walk on that mountain ridge. But Hegel succeeded.

Well, there are many more points which could come up, of course. You must have noticed that Hegel speaks with great distaste of the Roman patricians. Yes? This has something to do with his general intense dislike of aristocracy, which finds a somewhat

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[xix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 324.
[xx] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 324.
[xxi] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 734.
[xxii] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 735.
[xxiii] G.W.F. Hegel, "Aphorismen aus Hegels Wastebuch," *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 2:547. Hegel actually says reading the morning newspaper is the *realist's* morning prayer.

superficial explanation in the fact that he lived under an aristocracy in Berne, the capital of Switzerland, and this was the most abominable and rotten thing he had ever seen. But let me see if I can find that. He notes also the little point which he finds interesting where he says: "This is a peculiarity of the Romans: that they who had the great right of the world on their side also claim the little right of manifestos, of treatises, for themselves, and present them, as it were, like advocates."[xxiv] And then he goes on to say that in political situations of this sort everyone can take ill something which another did if he wishes, and if he regards it as useful, to take it ill. In other words, legal considerations, private law considerations in public and foreign affairs are always below the level of what is really going on. If the breaker of a treaty is resented, it is never resented as the breach of a treaty but because of what it speaks. In other words, it is resented because you think that the time has now come to resent it; if it were not opportune, it would not be noticed. This is part of Hegel's general way of looking at political things.

One point which has not become clear enough from what I said is that Hegel traces his "subjectivity," the "subjectivity" which later appears in the property owner and the late philosophers, to Rome in the flourishing period, because of the crucial importance of this conscientiousness in Rome. I mean what the Romans call *religio*, which is not what we mean by religion but which means almost consci[enti]ousness, but a conscientiousness which can apply to very important things as well as to very trivial superstitions. But here this particularly severe conscience against one's self, awareness of one's own compliance or non-compliance, is that principle of early Rome from which Hegel tries to understand these peculiarities of later Rome. So from this point of view the problem would be: By what dialectic of the Greek *polis* can we lead to the development of this peculiar legal consci[enti]ousness?[xxv]

Student: Would this end of history in Hegel's time be the equivalent of a Second Coming?

LS: No, no, I should have mentioned this before, that [this] is a lecture, not a full and scientific presentation of Hegel's views. It contains many adaptions to popular notions. For instance, one of the most important sections—as far as this question goes, it is *the* most important section—is the analysis of the Enlightenment and the fight between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy. Now in Hegel's point of view both were right and both were wrong. The Enlightenment meant for Hegel a fully developed complete this-worldliness plus utilitarianism. Now utilitarianism is not meant in the sense of Bentham, but in the sense that everything is for the sake of man, again not in the sense of a simplistic theology, but in that man is free to make everything, to use everything and to make it for himself—conquest of nature, you could almost say—and man is that being for which everything legitimately exists. This is not by nature, as the old-fashioned teleologies had said; but everything is so made that it can be transformed. Our noses are so made that we can put glasses on them. There are no holds that are barred; there are no

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[xxiv] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 700-1; *Philosophy of History*, 304.

[xxv] The tape was changed at this point.

sacred mountains that you cannot build railways over. Yes? Everything is simply subject to man and to man's bodily needs.

Now Hegel says that these higher people were much deeper human beings than these other fellows were. They knew that man can never be satisfied with the satisfaction of his bodily needs, that there is something like the soul and the bliss of the soul. That was something in which the orthodox people were right. But on the other hand, the orthodox people linked up the spiritual with the sensible in an impossible manner. Miracles, for instance. And here Hegel accepts the view of the Enlightenment that this was a superstition, and this whole sphere of, say, all the great questions, of miracles, the sacredness of the biblical texts as preserved by divine dispensation, were all superstition. Christianity does not have anything to do with externals; the worship of God in the spirit does not depend in any way on such external thoughts. The Enlightenment was fully right on this point. But precisely because it is purely spiritual, the traditional understanding of Christianity as laid down in the dogma is only a provisional thing. The true statement is that spirituality. I don't know how far this answers your question.

Student: In terms of Hegel's definition of spirit, where does the rational faculty come in? What is the rational faculty? Is it the spirit?

LS: Yes, but the question is how is this to be interpreted. The distinction on which Hegel starts, as did his contemporaries, is that of the subject and the object, yes? And there are various levels of that, for example, sense perception but also desire: the subject you and the object apple, and in this case the relation is consummated in the disappearance of the object. But on a higher level it would be the theoretical understanding, physics, for example. But Hegel would say that understanding thus understood, say, modern physics, is fundamentally inadequate. It points beyond itself. We discussed this subject once, in his analysis of matter, that matter is characterized by gravity and spatiality. Remember that? Where he tries to show that if one thinks through this gravity and spatiality, one sees that matter is something which is in itself contradictory; and if you want to understand matter, you have to understand it in the light of the mind. The fullest understanding, which Hegel calls "reason" as distinguished from "understanding," is that in which everything is understood as mind, either already mind or mind in disguise. I don't know to what extent that answers your question.

Student: Well, in the rational man who is trying to act rationally and who also has passions, is there a duality or is there . . .

LS: Yes, sure, Hegel wouldn't deny that; but he would say that the more interesting question is, for him: Under what conditions can a man be substantively rational? You see, when you say "a rational man," what do you mean by that? What does this concretely mean? For example, what does it mean if a man goes about in a rational way, not eating too much and not drinking too much?

Student: Well, I think it would be an awareness of one's own desires and a controlling of them.

LS: Yes, but with a view to what?

Student: Well, he would have to have a view of absolute rationality; he would have to have a view of the truth; he would have to have his ends in mind, as Hegel . . .

LS: Yes, but is man at all times capable of having a full grasp of the ends? That is Hegel's question, and he denies this and says it took these many millennia in order that man was able to see the true ends in their proper order; and this was inseparable from the fact that this is the society, at least potentially, in which the true ends are embodied. So in a way, of course, Socrates was a rational man, clearly, but it is not merely the formal rationality, as Hegel would put it; it is also the substantial rationality. Substantial rationality was not yet present in Socrates; otherwise Socrates would have written the final system of philosophy—and he didn't even write anything. That shows the defect of his rationality, to say nothing of the fact that the conflict between Socrates and the city of Athens shows the absence of rationality from the overall situation.

What Hegel means by rationality is not difficult to say in concrete terms in a general way. I have said it before and I will repeat it: the rights of man—the absolute impossibility of slavery or anything of that sort, or of something like the paternal power of the Roman law, where as long as an old fellow lives, if he lives to be ninety, his sons are not free men according to the old Roman law. That is against any reasonableness. So Hegel means the rights of man, but also government which is not derivative from the atomic multitude. That is equally important. If you want to state it in historical terms, he means the Bastille, the seizure of the Bastille, supplemented by Napoleon, by a ruler of the state who is capable of keeping the rights of man, say, as embodied in Napoleon's civic code . . .

You know, Hegel was throughout his life opposed to democracy, there is no question about that. But this has nothing to do with Hitler; it would be absolutely stupid to mention that in the same words. If you read his more political writings, for example, about the estate[s] of Württemberg, which was a kind of primitive constitutional monarchy around 1815-16, what he wanted was a representation of the people. Sure, but who should be the representative? The preferred representatives should be the state officials elected by the people, but they should be people who really understand something of government.[xxvi] If you say that Hegel believed in bureaucracy, you do not speak nonsense, but it must be properly defined: the actual government in the hands of the very well-trained and very well-educated and conscientious people. And the formal support for that is a hereditary monarch—it may be non-hereditary, but at any rate something which was exempt from the approval of the multitudes.

That was his notion of government, and it was certainly not the rule of a party in any manner or form. Hegel was a liberal but not a democrat. This thing existed in former times. Of course there are great objections, but Hegel would probably say that the

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[xxvi] G.W.F. Hegel, "Proceedings of the Estates Assembly in the Kingdom of Württemberg," in *Hegel's Political Writings*, ed. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

guarantee depends in critical periods on the existence of a few very able and correct men in the right spot, but this problem exists in every regime. Even democracy and communism needs them. But to the extent that something can be arranged by human provision of institutions, this is the proper thing to do—not Chinese mandarins who devote too much time to empty formalism like beautiful style, but people properly trained and educated and filled with the right kind of spirit and sense of honor. This is the best you can do. That is what Hegel meant. Bureaucracy, all right, but sensible bureaucracy. And the supplement to that is surely the rights of man; there is no question about that. We have seen what he said about such a relatively innocent thing as whipping as a punishment. After all, if that is legally applied, and the heaviness of the whip is determined by law and there must be a medical examination of the culprit before the whipping is applied, this would be an infinite improvement on what is done in a number of so-called totalitarian countries today. And Hegel even rejected that as being incompatible with the dignity of man. You have read that. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Well, Hegel had roughly this notion. The mass of the people would be rural peasants who would be completely preoccupied with their hard and somewhat isolated work, and their proper attitude is what he calls confidence, confidence in their betters, deference. By honestly working and being deferent, they fulfill their duties. Now of course that means fighting too. Then you need, however, a mobile class, a class which doesn't have the stability of the tillers of the soil. That is essential, and Hegel indicates this by what he says about the sea: the individual daring element, less responsible but essential to the greatness of the state—great industry, perhaps. Hegel accepted Adam Smith and free economy. There are some remarks in which you must have seen that, when he speaks about the property problem pending between the patricians and the plebeians in the agrarian law, for instance. Hegel was an adherent of the Manchesterian economics; there is no question about that. It must be there. Part of his grounds are the old Adam Smithian ones: that this is the most conducive to the "wealth of nations," but just as Adam Smith gave great leeway to the merchants but [says] they should not be the rulers, Hegel says this is not an activity which enables you to be a good governor. There must be a governing class, a governing estate different from both, and these are the truly educated classes. Hegel was distrustful of lawyers who do not belong to Class One or Class Two, simply because of their inclination to look at everything from the point of view of private law, which is sometimes an improper perspective for the judging of public affairs—the complaint which Burke had already made because of the composition of the National Assembly of France.[xxvii]

But where do the rights of man come in? Every citizen, whatever his origin, must have no legal impediment to acquiring any position in the state. The peasant's son, by studying and doing the other required things, ceases of course to be a peasant and the fact that he is a peasant's son is uninteresting. Hegel was absolutely in favor of a mobile society, and there is no question for him that the restrictions, the guild restrictions or whatever, are

[xxvii] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 129-31.

absolutely irrational and must be abolished. It was a modern state that Hegel had in mind, but not the modern democratic state, nor of course the modern so-called totalitarian state.

Student: It seems to me that he criticized the desire for creating a Roman private sphere.

LS: Not for creating a private sphere, but for forcing people to find their satisfaction in a private life only. These people in the Hegelian state, the thinking people, would find their satisfaction in their capacity as citizens, which does not necessarily mean in the capacity as governors, of course. It is a working community, not a rotten thing, which Hegel wanted. Yes?

Student: As a footnote to an earlier thing of yours, wouldn't the most Hegelian thing that ever happened be the Anglo-Indian Civil Service, bringing an end to suttee, etc.?

LS: Yes, that is part of the story, sure. If one wants a single formula indicating what Hegel's philosophy of right stands for, it would be rights of man plus a wholly independent civil service. And the connection in his case would be via monarchy. But the monarchy is only for the sake of these other two elements; these are the two pillars of the state, there is no question about that. I recalled to you on a former occasion a remark which later was made by a Nazi, that on the 31st of January, 1933, which was when Hitler came to power, that "Today, Hegel died!" That is absolutely true; as far as Germany goes, the intellectual rule of Hegel lasted until that moment—watered down, modified in many things, but fundamentally the old ruling people thought in Hegelian terms, and it played a decisive role. And that was also very deep in the German popular mind, their respect for high officials was along these lines.

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Session 11: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —It appeared from your paper that one of the greatest difficulties is with this German word [*Gemüt*][ii]. Do you know German?

Student: A little.

LS: Well, what does it mean? Hegel appeals to something which the immediate addressees, the students in Berlin and German readers in general, would know. This is one of the really untranslatable German words, and it is regarded popularly in Germany as a great asset of the Germans. For example, the other nations lack *Gemüt*; the Germans have *Gemüt*. It is extremely difficult to say what it is. It is the German translation of the Latin word *animus* and has something to do with the word *Mut*, which means courage, and is derived from that, but *Gemüt* is really something specifically German. What is Hegel's judgment on *Gemüt*? Does he think it is such a magnificent thing?

Student: I think he believes that the Germans had to temper it, that it could lead to barbarism as well as to the highest expression of man.

LS: Yes, it is wholly undetermined. Hegel said that *Gemüt* is the opposite of character. That throws some light on it. And there is the famous remark of Goethe, who said that *Gemüt* is the indulgence of one's own and other people's weaknesses. *Gemütlich* is the adjective and is commonly used to mean that people are together without making any effort but they enjoy it and there is no formality about it. But yet a cocktail party, for example, would not be *gemütlich* to the Germans, more coffee and cake. But at any rate, it is an untranslatable German word, just as you cannot translate generosity into German. That is a fact. It is impossible to translate generosity; there is no German equivalent of that. And *treue*, the other great word, is of course translatable to fidelity. It is also a particular claim of the Germans that they are loyal and faithful—*treue*. And again what does Hegel say about this German fidelity?

Student: He said that it was a purely personal . . .

LS: No, he goes beyond that; he says it is comparable to Punic faithlessness. So Hegel has no great sympathy for German mythology. Not at all. He is not a nationalist in this sense at all. One can say *Gemüt* means a certain internality which does not express itself in action. That one could perhaps say, or something of this sort. But in Hegel's construction of the history of the world, that takes on a meaning—quoting Hegel, "subjectivity." But the clearest case of subjectivity we had is at the beginning, in Africa: the mere subjective will. Now that means absolute barbarism. Hegel doesn't say much about the non-barbarism of the Germans prior to the conquest by the Romans, or else by

[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as lecture 10.
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

their Romanization. What is the difference between the mere subjectivity of the Germans and the mere subjectivity of the negroes?

Student: Well, he would say that it was unformed and that a potentially more rational aim was possible.

LS: But take the description of the negroes: there is nothing above the subjective will, not even the gods, because the gods are merely used by them. "They are sorcerers," Herodotus says, and Hegel accepts that. And regarding the Germans, he quotes a passage from Tacitus about the Germans and their position to the gods, and they are not so very different—no real subjection to the gods. Now what is the difference, then? Well, one could say this: as soon as the Germans became important for world history, they looked up to Rome, either pagan or Christian, but it became important for them when Rome had become Christian. So this subjectivity is distinguished from the subjectivity of mere barbarism because it has something beyond it to bow to, in a way, but which has not permeated it; and this peculiar formlessness and infinity of the merely internal derives its meaning from the fact that it has outside of it this un-understood, but in a very vague way believed-in, objectivity. I can't find any other formula for this. Hegel's procedure here, as throughout, is that he starts from the most massive and most visible phenomena: this modern world, say from the end of the pagan Roman Empire or from the end of Roman Empire proper, [in] 476, up to the Reformation. And there are certain features there which every child knows: the unity of Christianity, that Christianity did not emerge among these peoples of Northern Europe, that it is an alien religion. In all earlier cases, the religions were indigenous to the country, and here for the first time it is alien, and this dualism characterized them very superficially.

Secondly, connected with this dualism the Germans in their native tribal habits and Christianity coming from the Mediterranean, and this dualism is then reflected in the whole life of the Middle Ages. The contrast between saints and barbarians: the mediation, the good citizen, is absent; it emerges very slowly and does not yet predominate. Secondly, the dualism between the clergy and the laity and in the extreme form of the monks and the non-monks, the dualism between the power spiritual and the temporal. By virtue of the fact that the unity is spiritual and not temporal, we have feudalism, which means the absolutization of the particular and not of the universal.

And now there comes certain features which are peculiar to the Germans in the Middle Ages, and these are the particularly great political miseries. In France and England, the modern state develops in the Middle Ages already; in Germany, it develops only at the cost of the German state proper, that is to say, the Empire. Certain parts of the German Empire begin to become modern, but the German state as such does not become modernized; it is destroyed as a feudal monster about 1806. So Germany is characterized by a particularly high degree of political misery. The same applies to Italy, but there it is for some reason which is not so important. The most striking thing is that the bishoprics as thieves are characteristic of Germany and to some extent of Italy and are absent from England, France, and Spain. This means a completely irrational merger of the power spiritual and the power temporal. That this had very good practical reasons originally—

that the German Emperor or King could rely to a greater degree on the bishops, who were much better trained for administration and other purposes—is of course true. But the crucial point is what it means in the overall context of society. The other two characteristics of Germany, fidelity and *Gemüt*, we have already mentioned, although we will have to go into that again later. Now, however, there is one other point which is most massively characteristic of the Middle Ages, the event or action in which medieval life culminates. What is that?

Student: The Crusades.

LS: The Crusades! In other words, just as the conquest of Troy and the expedition of Alexander the Great are the crucial events of Greece, and the Punic Wars and the conquest of the whole inhabited world by the Romans, the characteristic event of the Middle Ages is the Crusades, which are from Hegel's point of view a clear indication of the misery of the Middle Ages. But also from Hegel's point of view the Crusades are at the same time absolutely necessary, given the premise of the Middle Ages. Both the Crusades and their failure contribute to the beginning of modernity.

Now we must discuss these things in somewhat greater detail. Hegel makes the remark right at the beginning of this section that

> here [meaning in the Germanic world—LS] the ideal rules in the manner of providence and fulfills its purposes through the contradicting willing of the nations. In the case of the Greeks and Romans, both are not so different [meaning providence and the will of the peoples—LS]; but the Greeks and Romans have to a higher degree a correct consciousness of that which they will and of that which they ought to will.[iii]

The Greeks and Romans were less blind than the medieval men. Why is this so? In other words, we have in the history of the Middle Ages and the Dark Ages a clear example of a ruse of reason, where reason wills something without the actors being aware of it. In classical antiquity there was a greater agreement between what the world mind willed and what the Greek and Roman peoples willed. Why is this so? What is the most striking difference, from any point of view, between classical antiquity and the Middle Ages? Let us see whether we can link this up. What is the characteristic feature of the medieval world as compared with classical antiquity? It is nothing very far-fetched.

Student: Christianity?

LS: Yes, but what does this mean regarding man's knowing, man's understanding?

Student: That it is ultimately based on faith, whereas among the Greeks it was based on reason.

[iii] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 757.

LS: Yes, it was something of this sort. In other words, the true content is supernatural; there are mysteries of faith. Nothing of this kind existed in classical antiquity, therefore the classical men were able to understand themselves better than the medieval men were. But from Hegel's point of view this means that, while in regard to this formal rationality the classical people were superior to these medieval men, the content of classical rationality was narrower, but subjectively the ancient people were more rational than medieval men. That is the remark on which he begins.

Then the point on which Hegel starts is this: that the supernaturalness is alien to the human mind as human mind. Now this radical alienness is reflected in the fact that for the Germans the religion of the Church was an alien religion. But these two things are connected: by its very nature revealed religion had to be alien to man as man; otherwise, in its own claim it would be primarily rational.

There are other points which do not come out in the English. I read to you one remark:

> The historical genesis of such a state [namely, of modern monarchy—LS] is necessarily romantic; that is to say, that which happens for this purpose happens unconsciously, seems to take place as if it were something accidental; for here spirituality presents itself as external necessity. No state in modern times has come to its laws like Athens or Rome, everything has happened haphazardly—this or that need showed itself and was satisfied by this or that law. The passions and interests of the various princes of the estates and so on produced the laws. The pretensions of the various parts conflicted with each other and thus produced the whole which the mind has felt as a need.[iv]

In other words, this Burkean notion of what the proper place of the coming into being of a society is: here a grievance is remedied without thinking of how the remedy fits into the established order; new frictions arise and you remedy them; and yet in the course of time it appears that this was a much wiser process than planning would have been. The ancient world was a planning world, Hegel implies, and therefore there was a notion of a legislator, mythical or not, who at the beginning orders the *polis*, and the welfare of the *polis* is bound up with the preserving of this rationally established order. No such claim is made in the Middle Ages. The customs remain merely regional customs, and people get along with them as well as they can. They get into great troubles, and they do something if the troubles become too great and so on.

Now Hegel's new point: this medieval thing was a monstrosity, but by virtue of the overall context this monstrosity was the means by which the most rational state emerged. The Greeks were rational but their state was imperfectly rational; medieval man was irrational but this very irrationality was what led to the truly rational state. This is the implication. And therefore Hegel's judgment was ambiguous in relation to the modern world. He has hardly anything but contempt for the Middle Ages, and the justification for the Middle Ages is only that its misery led to modernity. The only justification! But since modernity supplies the solution to the human problem, the rational state, this is a

[iv] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 760-61.

justification of the Middle Ages, Hegel's claim being that only through this misery and irrationality could the rational state be established. Or as he says in another passage: "Only through that slavery could rational freedom emerge."[v] And that is based on the premise that the ultimate reason for the misery of the Middle Ages was Christianity and that Christianity, which led to that terrible misery and irrationality became purified, became conscious of itself through this long process in which the Crusades play a special role. He also speaks of the principle of proscription in this context. That is in English on page 344.

Student: "In this period, two aspects of society . . . private right excluding a sense of universality."[vi]

LS: Yes, that is crucial. Only private right, excluding a sense of universality; there is no law proper. A law is a decision of the community as a community through its representatives. But in the Middle Ages, all rights, the right of ruling, are considered as private rights—the liege lord and the vassal. [The] relationship is fundamentally one of private right; it is not that of ruler of a government and a subject. And this goes through all stages. We will see what this means *in concreto*.

One more of these general remarks about a few more points from this introduction. With the entry of the Christian principle, the earth had become, literally stated, for the mind. The earth has become property of the mind, one could almost say. The world has been circumnavigated, and for the European it is something round. What is not yet ruled by the Europeans is either not worth the trouble or it is destined to be ruled by the Europeans. The relation to the outside is no longer determinate; the revolution takes place within them. In other words, in all earlier cultures there was a relation to the outside: the Greeks and the barbarians; the Romans and their subjects, and so on. But now, after the original influence of the Roman-Christian world on the Germans, all further happenings are strictly intra-European, and Europe reaches its full freedom once it has been given this initial motion. Europe can no longer learn anything from non-Europe. Everything it needs is implied in the heritage it got via Christianity, and therefore it is the final culture.

Perhaps you will look on page 350, at the end of the first paragraph.

Student: "Yet this entire body of peoples . . . for in history, we have to do with the past."[vii]

LS: Yes, this seems to confirm . . . You remember this question we discussed in connection with America: Has history come to an end? Or, differently stated, does Hegel regard history as finished merely for the commonsensical reason that we cannot know the future, and therefore every historian has to regard the present, whatever it may be, as the end? This was Collingwood's interpretation, and this formulation would seem to confirm

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[v] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 407.
[vi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 344.
[vii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 350.

Collingwood's interpretation.[viii] But we have seen other passages regarding America and also some more general statements which make it clear that these are really only popular and provisional statements of Hegel. His true view is that there can no longer be a new principle, because the true and most comprehensive principles have been found and anything new would merely be a representation of something which had already been overcome. But I want to draw your attention to this passage in order that you can see that there is at least some *prima facie* evidence for the opposite interpretation. Let us turn to page 345, second paragraph.

Student: "We may distinguish these periods . . . spirit is the harmonizing of the antithesis."[ix]

LS: Yes, there cannot be another development after the kingdom of the spirit has come, with the full completion in the Reformation, as we shall see next time. The realm of the Son is of course the Middle Ages, where the appearance shines on the worldly existence as on something alien: the clear separation of the worldly and the otherworldly, of the spiritual and the temporal. The end of history has come.

Now I follow the argument. There are a few points, some of which are more curiosities than of broader interest. There is a passage which doesn't occur in the translation. "Prussia and Austria are not properly speaking German states,"[x] Hegel says around 1800 and when he was already a full professor of philosophy in Berlin. That is quite interesting, because of course they are marginal; they did not belong to the German Reich proper, except those parts which were fiefs of the Reich. But Prussia proper, what came to be called East Prussia, were not Germans.

Now let us turn to page 354, second paragraph.

Student: "We have said that the Germans were predestined . . . had that opposition been absent."[xi]

LS: Now here he speaks of the general character of the Middle Ages in which, he says in earlier passages, there was the greatest dissension which history has shown. No antagonism of such magnitude and of such an extreme had ever existed in the history of mankind. Christianity and the Germans, these were the most extreme things, and Christianity was imposed on the Germans; this was not the quiet development of a principle where the alien has only the relation of a stimulus, but this heterogeneous thing was put as an infinite weight on human beings and this created the radical conflict.

Now we go on to the top of page 356, in the German on page 789.

[viii] Again, see Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 119-20.
[ix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 345.
[x] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 779.
[xi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 354.

Student: "In short, while the West began to shelter . . . the totality of spiritual manifestation."[xii]

LS: Yes, that is all we need. Note the "necessarily" which comes out more strongly in the German. The particularization of all relations in the West had to be opposed by the opposite direction, so that the whole becomes integrated. In other words, the fact that Christianity was challenged by Islamic rising is an absolute necessity. Not only Christianity but Islam too is a necessity of the same kind, although not of the same rank. What Hegel means here is that the West decayed into complete particularization, the feudal system, and it could only be united to some extent by a threat from without. And furthermore, Western society and human life had exhausted so much that it could not be a threat; therefore a new principle had to emerge which united non-Westerners in order that they could bring the Westerners to a sense of unity. This is a most characteristic remark of Hegel. What do you think of it? Well, if Mohammed had died or had been murdered very early, prior to his flight to Medina or so, what would Hegel have said to that?

Student: He would have said that somebody else would have done the same thing.

LS: Yes, sure. Whatever happens that is of any magnitude, of any significance, happens necessarily. Not necessarily in this particular form; it could have been a man called something else, that doesn't make any difference, but it was necessary that this emerge, and then of course it did emerge. We will find other passages to this effect later.

Now he begins at the starting point of the German development. Page 369, bottom. We can safely skip quite a few sections because they are merely summaries of what is known from general history.

Student: "As observed above, the idea of duty was not present . . . it had to be restored."[xiii]

LS: Yes, this is the sentence I meant. Now in the German this is much more fully developed: "these nations had accepted the principles of Christianity into their hearts, and the principle of Christianity is the principle of freedom; but since they accepted it only in their heart, it was effective in them only in the individual"[xiv]—meaning it did not become a social force, and therefore there didn't exist a sense of duty. The problem consisted in developing and transforming the principle of freedom into a sense of duty. This is a general description of the problem to be solved.

Now let us turn to his remark about the Church in particular, on page 377, second paragraph, where he tries to show the fundamental lie of the Middle Ages, as he calls it. First I would like to read a passage which isn't there: "The principle of the Church is this: the wonder of presence; that God is [a] spiritual presence and yet is present as a thing."[xv]

[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 355-56.
[xiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 369.
[xiv] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 809-10.
[xv] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 822.

This is the essence of Catholicism. Now let us see how Hegel continues his argument in the paragraph which we now read.

Student: "We have, then, to probe to its depths . . . that belong to the idea of deity."[xvi]

LS: Now never forget this—we discussed it last time—this thing never existed in any religion prior to Christianity. The Greek gods looked like men but they were not men; they were idealized human beings, they did not die. Only in Christianity is God at the same time truly manlike. This is underlined and preserved in medieval Christianity. And now we must see where the fundamental misconception entered.

Student: "The condition of the mediation in question . . . outward has sanctity ascribed to it."

LS: Now this is a crucial point. Go on.

Student: "The Holy as a mere thing has the character of externality—"[xvii]

LS: "—His sacrifice has not only happened once, but as a living, suffering, and dying God, it takes place always. It is shallow and irreligious to regard the suffering life and death of Christ merely historically, as a happening. It is a real God who sacrifices himself, and this sacrifice takes place always and everywhere in the community, and as a true sacrifice in which the community is acting with God, and Christ is resurrected again in human beings."[xviii] In other words, the presence of God in the whole, that is the sound principle, the religious principle. But on the other hand, that the Host is divorced to some extent from external ritual happenings is the fundamental defect of medieval Christianity. For example, that the moral qualities of the priest are utterly irrelevant as far as his sacramental function is concerned, that is for Hegel the impossible point—what some other writers after Hegel called the "sacramental character of medieval Christianity." To repeat: the eternal repetition, the eternal presence of this event, as distinguished from a mere event which happened once, is the truly religious. But that it is connected with the mere external world is a fundamental defect. From this point of view, Hegel tries to understand the Crusades especially. But let us first see a few other points.

In the immediate sequel, Hegel explains how out of this fundamental misconception the immorality of the Middle Ages, as he calls it, follows, namely, the degradation of marriage, work, and freedom. The degradation of marriage—celibacy was regarded as more holy; of work—the praiseworthy character of poverty; of freedom—the vow of obedience, which means in effect obedience without understanding, a servile obedience. We can read only one passage from that, perhaps the most important one, on page 380, second paragraph, in the German on page 828. The second moral principle is that which we call probity. Now what happens to probity in the Middle Ages?

[xvi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 377.
[xvii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 377. The tape was changed at this point.
[xviii] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 822.

Student: "A second point of social morality is presented . . . thus received the stamp of consecration."[xix]

LS: In German that is more extensive:

> The second moral principle is that which we call probity in general, namely, that man has a right that he gains by his particular intelligence and his own work, his means of living. In such activity, in the work of man for his subsistence, lies his honor. That he depends, as regards to his needs, only on his industriousness, his conduct, and his intelligence, and that he also enjoys what he acquires. That he enjoys it is moral; for to the extent which he enjoys it, others draw their means of subsistence from it who by this very fact are again active. This principle of activity, industry, one could almost say bourgeoisie, is opposed *by the principle of the Church, in which it is regarded as meritorious* to choose poverty and not to enjoy what is one's own but to give it to the poor. By this fact, poverty, laziness, and inactivity, were put higher than bourgeois probity, the immoral was consecrated into the whole.[xx]

You see how much Hegel identifies himself with modern principles.

But let us now come to the statement of the fundamental contradiction of the medieval world. On page 381, second paragraph.

Student: "According to the above, the Church . . . is none other than a lie."[xxi]

LS: Let us leave it at that. That is in a way a very succinct formulation of all the criticisms of the Church which have been made partly by Protestants and partly by rationalists, but in Hegel it all takes on a strict unity because it is all deduced from the single principle that the absolute has become a thing. It would not be strict in Hegel's language to say that it has become something objective, because in Hegel's language something objective is something of universal validity and is therefore something mental, spiritual. The strict word would be sensual, something accessible to the senses, namely, the visible Host is identified with the absolute. In other words, to seek the spiritual or infinite in the wrong place means to radically misunderstand both the infinite and the finite, the spiritual and the temporal. The only genuine unity of the Middle Ages—that follows from all these things—is the Church. There is no genuine unity in the secular. Any genuine unity of the secular would weaken the Church on which everything depends. But at the same time there is a genuine demand for a real unity of the secular, and this contradiction finds its full expression in the shadowy character of the emperor. The emperor claims to universal rule but of course cannot go beyond that claim.

[xix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 380.
[xx] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 828-29.
[xxi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 381.

Now this externality of the holy which Hegel has spoken of before leads to this consequence: there is an extreme, a peak, of the external holy. What is that? It cannot be the Host, because everybody knows that the Host is made in France or Germany or wherever it was. But if you seek the holy in externals and find it, for example, in miracles—Hegel says a lot about the point of miracles and religion—but there is some point where this external is concentrated. What is that? God has become man in Jesus and you want to commune with God, but sensually. Where is, from the point of view of sensuality, the closest point for such communion?

Student: The human body?

LS: No, the human body is the body, say, of you. What is sensually accessible of Jesus as the Christ? Sensually accessible, not in the spirit?

Student: The grave?

LS: Yes. That is the relic, *par excellence*. And therefore Hegel says the Crusades are the fulfillment of the Middles Ages' fundamental error. The Crusades are the work of united Christianity—the only work of united Christianity, and necessarily so because of the fundamental misconception of the Church. And here we see the fundamental contradiction according to Hegel very clearly: a military operation at the head of which is the pope, the head of the power spiritual.

Now this development of what Hegel says is the fundamental necessity of the Crusades is, I think, a beautiful example of Hegel's construction of history. That the Crusades are the most striking event of the Middle Ages is admitted by everyone. And then Hegel tries to show how the peculiar Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is distinct from both Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines. That these two things, the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and the Crusades, are necessarily connected by more than mathematical necessity is, I think, a magnificent example of this procedure.

Now let us look at some other points in this connection, on page 391 in the English, and page 847 in the German.

Student: "The West once more sallied forth in hostile array . . . the essential interest of the Crusades."[xxii]

LS: This is Hegel, I would say, not at his best. He asks why there was not a single leader but always more than one leader, and answers that the peak, the leader, was sought in the Holy Sepulchre, and therefore there could not be unity of leadership. This is not so good, I think, because he admits in another passage that the unity of leadership was supplied by the pope. In this connection I also mention that later on he speaks of the military orders of the Middle Ages, the Templars and so on; and there are three, and Hegel does not even try to show that there had to be three. On the page before, he had spoken of the two great orders founded in the thirteenth century, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, and you

[xxii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 392.

see there were only two of them. Because Hegel is trying in every respect, wherever he finds a triad—for example, epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry—to connect it with the fundamental triad. This is one reason why he is so frequently rebuked, but this is not a sufficient criticism, although it is perfectly legitimate when used in a subordinate manner.

We come now to the crucial passage, and I hope we can understand it. On page 392, paragraph 3, and in the German on page 849. Now before we go into that, you must see that Hegel has now to show, after having shown first that medieval Christendom had to culminate in the Crusades, what is the meaning of the failure of the Crusades. The Crusades are the peak of the Middle Ages in both ways—the whole movement of before moves up to it; and then there is the failure, and in this failure modernity is born. Now let us see how he achieves that.

Student: "Thus does Christendom come into the possession . . . it was practically undeceived."[xxiii]

LS: "Practically undeceived" means undeceived by practice, by action on it—you know, not practically in the local sense, where it means "for all practical purposes." It means that it was undeceived in the most convincing manner: they drew the practical conclusion from the Crusades; they really went to the Holy Land and conquered the grave, and they did it fully. And there they learned the lesson, at least potentially.

Student: "And the result which it brought back . . . self-reliance and spontaneous activity—"

LS: "Self-confidence" would be a better translation.

Student: "The West bade an eternal farewell to the East…appeared again on the scene of history as one body."[xxiv]

LS: So in other words, the worldly unity of Christianity contradicts the idea of Christianity. That is what he had in mind. Now let us see what resolves this. What was justified and legitimate was to seek the definite embodiment which unites the finite and the infinite, the worldly and the eternal; but the Middle Ages sought it in a thing, and this is impossible. The only reconciliation of the finite and the infinite is the human mind, and this began to appear after the failure of the Crusades. And this is the principle of modernity, Hegel says. Characteristically, he doesn't call it the soul, although in a more colloquial speech he might speak of the soul. But the soul suffers from Hegel's point of view from the old ambiguity that there are souls of plants and animals, and there is the unconscious and so on. This is not clearly developed in the English. I will try to show it from the German. In the German on page 854 following:

> The quest for the "this" as the otherworldly or absolute has failed. That is what led the Crusades. Man turned, therefore, to the "this" as worldly. The "this" as worldly

[xxiii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 392-93.
[xxiv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 393.

> is not the Host, because the Host as the "this" as worldly claims to be the otherworldly to the "this" as worldly, without any equivocation. And that is the mind's worldly activity. Man begins to find the 'this' which he is seeking in his own finite activity.[xxv]

And this of course means "work," and then the desire leading to work. But work is of course much more than desire. In desire you are not active; in work you are acting, you transform nature, you transform the given, and this means that in work there is present a necessary element of universality. Said very simply, you cannot work on wood, for example, without becoming aware of certain qualities of wood as wood, which is the universal.

So work is essentially something intellectual—work as transforming. We are not speaking now of work in the simple sense of carrying blocks of stone; that would not yet be of this nature. And as a consequence of that, associations are formed for this external purpose but afterward also for the purpose of civil freedom. Thus a new element in European Christendom emerges which is different from the Church and even excluded from it, and also different from the feudal order. This principle—desire, work, freedom under law—has as its content a reasonable rational freedom, although it appears only in a limited form as the freedom of property, freedom to use one's ability, and so on. In other words, the first emergence of rational freedom is the freedom of property derivative from work.

You see there is a Lockean element coming out according to Hegel already in the late Middle Ages. In the strictly medieval system it is indeterminate whether the content is reasonable or not; in the feudal system private property is recognized. But at the same time things are regarded as private property which ought not to be so regarded; for example, the right of the First Knight, the right to positions as ministers and officials which were bought as private property. To repeat, the Middle Ages were the age of private rights. There were no public rights, strictly speaking, because feudal law is not public law. But in this order there emerges an entirely new concept of private right, namely, such a private right as is legitimately private right, the right of rational freedom. And this is, in the most narrow and fundamental sense, the right of property derivative from work. The Middle Ages had private right without distinguishing what is reasonably private and what is not reasonably private, and the extreme example of what should not be private right is the right of the First Knight, whereas the right which a man derives from the fact that he has worked on a certain thing is a rational right. Let us never forget this when the question of private property comes up. There was a clear elaboration, or at least an attempt at a clear elaboration of a natural right to property, in the language of Locke, or of a rational freedom in the language of Hegel, which does not allow everything to become private property but which regarding certain things *demands* that they be private property.

Do you see then the overall construction of Hegel? The unity of the finite and infinite is thought in the Middle Ages to be a thing which is meant to be in itself finite and infinite,

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[xxv] *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 854.

sensible and spiritual. And this is impossible, and the empirical proofs were the Crusades. The only "this" in which this unity can be found is the human consciousness: no thing, only the human consciousness. But the human consciousness begins to find itself as the unity of the finite and infinite only as it were by turning its back to the infinite and limiting itself to finite work, to an activity in the world which claims to be only worldly: labor. Out of this there emerges with inner necessity the rational notion of private property which requires within itself a rational legal order protecting private property. And that is how Hegel collapses a long story into a few sentences. He telescopes it into a very short one.

What he had in mind is this: the problem of the private particular will and the general will. The private will directed to legitimate goals, the natural right, as it was formerly called, cannot be preserved unless a general will emerges; that is to say, a law protecting these natural rights, these natural freedoms. This is then of a much higher order than mere rights of private property because it has this universality which mere right of property lacks. Now once this worldly world of the rational state is understood as sacred and in no way inferior to any other human organization, say, the Church, the condition is created for transforming what hitherto was spiritual power into the free rule of the spirit, and that is in historical terms the Reformation. This is Hegel's construction of this process.

Let me see . . . From a certain moment on, Hegel says, the Church ceases to be the bearer of the world mind, because the world mind has already reached the stage to know the sensual as sensual, the external as external, to be active in this finite in a finite manner, and precisely in this activity to know itself in a valid and justified activity. This relation to the world mind now that man has discovered the most elementary principles of a rational worldly order is the reason why the Church now externally decays. The Church as it were cannot live in the same world with the presence for the first time of the true principles of rational freedom in its primary form. Its primary form is private property understood as derivative from labor. Private property is very old, but that the true principles of private property have been discovered is a new thing, and that is due to the fact of man turning away from hopeless attempts to find the unity of the finite and infinite in things, and turning to things without claiming that they are more than things; the preoccupation with finite things. This humble and unimposing activity—a man making shoes, a man making a table—contains in itself the whole realm of rationality. It is not in itself; it contains it, because the order which makes possible private property is the rational state; and then the rational state requires for its own understanding a rational understanding of the inifite—which is, finally, Hegel's philosophy. But it is important to see that for Hegel the beginning of that thing is the turning away from the illegitimate fusion of the finite and the infinite to a merely finite fusion which develops for the first time as the principles of rational freedom.

On page 402 in your translation, you will find the famous remark of Hegel about gunpowder. We mentioned this, but let us read it.

Student: "It was one of the chief instruments . . . on the part of the forces they command."[xxvi]

LS: The German goes on: "The wars are also now less bloody because everyone can recognize danger from afar."[xxvii] And I have heard frequently the statement that since the French Revolution, the battles have become more bloody. Churchill has a nice discussion of that in his *Marlborough*,[xxviii] where he discusses how terribly bloody Blenheim and other battles of the eighteenth century were. I wonder whether anyone knows anything about the bloodiness of medieval battles compared with the battles after the invention of gunpowder? I have the feeling that we haven't gained anything by this change. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Oh, you mean the number of the population? I see! Yes, but . . .

Student: [inaudible]

LS: That of course is partly due to procreation; you must not forget that. One would have to count the number of dead and compare with (a) the number of soldiers engaged in warfare, and (b) the number of the population, and one would have to do this for different periods. I do not possess such statistics; I don't know whether there are any reliable statistics for earlier times. At any rate, Hegel doesn't even try to prove this, and therefore one can only take this as an assertion. Yes?

Student: I just have one statistic in this respect, I do not have any . . .

LS: Yes, but one could say that the Thirty Years War was a very unusual war. I don't know, but I am very skeptical of such statements, that is all I can say. The ennobling of war by the invention of gunpowder can be very well questioned by the very examples which he gives here: the greatest coward, well placed, can kill the most heroic man with the greatest possible ease.[xxix]

Student: The remark about generalship is very questionable indeed, but . . .

LS: Hegel would not deny that, but what Hegel means is that the need for leadership is more important in modern war than in tribal war, where the more physical power and perhaps the element of surprise alone might be decisive.

Student: It may also have something to do with the abstractness of the enemy. This is what Churchill implied, in that there was something wrong with the First World War, especially for the generals, in that the enemy was completely abstract. Perhaps the change

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[xxvi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 402.
[xxvii] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 856.
[xxviii] Winston Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (1933).
[xxix] See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 855; *Philosophy of History*, 401.

between the First World War and the Second World War is in respect of the fact that the generals really got themselves killed in the Second World War. That probably improved the qualities of generalship.

LS: I see. Well, that had something to do with airplanes, I think.

Student: Also with automobiles.

LS: I see.

Student: Churchill's contention is that what disappeared was the conception of the warrior king.

LS: I remember the description which he gives in the *Marlborough* somewhere of the general who really surveys with his own eyes the field of battle. And now there is a complete dependence on reports; they can only look at maps and no longer at the field, and the quality that this presence implied in former times, the variety of gifts which were required, and this is no longer necessary. Now there may be a strictly scientific general who would be completely unable to address the troops and to inspire them, while in former ages he would have to have this variety of gifts. That is interesting, because Hegel has of course to show everything characteristically modern has the marks of progress. That is a very interesting point. Now there is one passage which we have still to consider, on page 397, second paragraph.

Student: "Thought was first directed to theology . . . was a stereotyped dogma—"

LS: "Stereotyped" is not a very good translation; "an established" would be better—it doesn't have a derogatory meaning.

Student: "the impulse now arose to justify this body of doctrine . . . that philosophy devoted its energies."[xxx]

LS: One would not expect anything different from Hegel, of course. If even the given in the simple sense—that there is a world, for example—cannot be accepted by philosophy; still less can there be a given dogma, yes? But a more interesting remark on this subject occurs on page 838 in the German:

> In the Middle Ages, theology and philosophy are one. This is, it may be remarked in passing, the proper position for theology. If theology is not philosophy, it does not know what it wants [meaning the coming of it—LS]—the doctrine is contained in the Catechism. The execution of this is philosophy, since the historic is not religion.[xxxi]

[xxx] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 397.
[xxxi] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 838.

That is a very summary statement. Do you understand it? According to the official medieval doctrine, theology and philosophy are radically distinguished, philosophy being the work of human reason and religion being based on faith. Hegel says, contrary to the historical truths, that in the Middle Ages theology and philosophy are one. But what is the element of truth in this literally untrue remark?

Student: I think it is the content that brings them together rather than some . . .

LS: The problem is discussed today in this form particularly. The old-fashioned Thomists insist on the distinction between philosophy and theology as it is stated particularly by Thomas Aquinas. But the more modern neo-Thomists say that Thomas's purely philosophical works are the commentaries on Aristotle and that kind of thing, but the two greatest works, the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, are theological works; and theology and philosophy are here in a way united, and a strict separation between theology and philosophy is not what Thomas was concerned with. To that extent one could say, as Hegel says, "But this is the right point of view for theology, that theology and philosophy are one." He doesn't say this is the right point of view for philosophy! Then he goes on to say, "If theology is not philosophy, it doesn't know what it wants, for the teaching that is easily accessible, the Creed, the Catechism, gives you that; but in the moment that you want to think about it and not merely accept it as the content of faith, you begin philosophizing." And what Hegel implies of course is that if you philosophize consistently, you will finally arrive at Hegel's *Logic*, which is the authentic interpretation of the Catechism—the *only* authentic interpretation. This is clearly what he means! Because if the final philosophy is Christianity "understood," and the final philosophy is Hegel's *Logic*, that follows necessarily. But this occurs only in passing.

Session 12: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —an externalization of the reconciliation to the Host—yes?—by a priest who does not have to have any faith or any morals, merely imposed sacred character. The character of his office suffices for that external. This culminates in the Crusades—we have discussed this last time—and then Luther discovers the principle of inwardness, of faith alone. But this inwardness remains in the first stage mere inwardness, and therefore the old distinction between the worldly and the unworldly recurs on the Protestant level in spite of the abolition of celibacy, and the distinction between the worldly and the unworldly, the laity and the priesthood, and the power spiritual and the power temporal. It comes, but it comes in the individual, namely, whether he is saved or not saved, whether his intentions are good or bad, concern with the purity of intention, a fear of the tricks of the devil, or whatnot. This kind of thing is characteristic of the pre-Enlightenment development. And according to Hegel this question of the purity of intention is undecidable: it is absolutely impossible to decide by introspection whether you are guided by virtue or vice, by God or the devil. In this respect, he is a very tough Aristotelian. As Aristotle puts it, "The intentions are manifest."[ii] You can only see what a man is worth by his actions, his whole course of life. This is a true and necessary externalization of the inward. Not that the inward should depend on the external—that was Catholicism's interpretation—but that the inward should issue in the external, in such externals as are fully intelligible in terms of the internals, meaning the society in which the reasonableness of the institution of the laws is acceptable in principle to everyone, in fact, only to those who take the necessary trouble to understand it. A complicated legal provision cannot be intelligible to a man who reads it once and says, 'No, I don't like it." That's clear. That is the general character of the modern development according to Hegel.

I would like to read to you a passage we should read on page 420, in the German on page 885. Here he discusses a question: Why did not the whole of Germany become Protestant? Certain parts, say, Bavaria, Austria, and Bohemia become Catholic again, after having been almost Protestant. Now what does he say? Let us read that.

Student: "We must further observe . . . cannot be rooted out again."

LS: And now a few lines later, about the Romanic nations also.

Student: "But the Romanic nations also . . . the desired object."[iii]

LS: Period! So now, what about Bavaria and Austria? That's a real problem. In other words, Hegel's optimism, if we may call it that, is put to a somewhat severe test. Why did

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[i] In the original transcript, this session appears as part of the second lecture, but it clearly follows the previous session (11) on the Middle Ages and the Crusades. Much of the discussion in the first part of the session appears to be missing.

[ii] Though I cannot locate this exact quote, the basic idea can be found in the first few chapters of book 3 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics.*

[iii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 420.

the Reformation lose out in France, and in Austria and Bavaria? The reasons given are entirely different in the two cases. In the one case it was mere accident.

Student: Couldn't you say that the "spirit of the nation" didn't crave . . .

LS: But what about Austria . . .

Student: . . . yes, in Austria.

LS: Oh no, but it is quite clear that the state and the city . . . That was absolutely touch and go. No, that is the old question which we have discussed so frequently, the problem of chance, whether Hegel makes sufficient allowance for that. I read to you a passage, which is not in the English, at the beginning of this chapter. When he speaks of Luther, he says: "The Reformation as such, when it is truly a reformation, is not bound to an individual, as for example to Luther. The great individuals are generated by the time, by the epoch which demands it."[iv] But what if Luther had died as a child, for example? How can we *know* that? Now this of course is the same thing which the Marxists say. You know that if it had not been for Lenin, it would have been someone else. Now in this case we have a very good detailed discussion in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, where he goes on at some length and is honest enough to admit that if Lenin had not been available in Petrograd in 1917, the thing would not have happened. I mean, it was not necessary that he died; if Ludendorff[v] simply had not sent him through that famous sealed train—Trotsky knew quite well the distribution of forces at the time—he could not have made it stick, only Lenin could. He asserts of course [that] the same thing would have happened after ten or twenty years, but that of course is an unsupportable assertion. That the Czarist Russia was probably dead before, one could believe, but that it should take the form of a communist dictatorship, that was touch and go. And therefore I think that in order to get the necessary condition for judging these things, one must really go very much into the details of the time. I found this discussion of Trotsky's particularly illuminating, because he is after all committed to this view, and when he goes into such details he admits that he is false to it, that there is such a thing as touch and go, and that no one can know even after the event that it had to be so—not to mention before the event.

In conclusion, I would like to read to you two sentences from Hegel's *History of Philosophy* which indicate the problem, to me at least, very clearly. He discusses there the older histories of philosophy of the eighteenth century, and he blames the author — Brucker was his name—because his presentation was unhistorical in the highest degree; it was not taken purely from the sources, it was always mixed up with the writer's own reflections and the conclusions which he draws are meant to be historical. If only the main proposition was known of a given philosophic system—for example, if Thales said the principle of all is water—Brucker deduces from this simple proposition twenty or thirty other propositions of which there is not a single true word, meaning that Thales

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[iv] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 877.

[v] Erich Ludendorff was a leading German general during World War One and facilitated Lenin's return to Russia in order to destabilize the czarist regime.

never said it and in all probability never thought of it.[vi] This is absolutely unhistorical. I think we would all agree to that. Yes? Hegel had just commentary here. Now let us read a statement two pages later.

Student: "The ancients had a different point of view. Their concepts are radically different, and therefore they are more difficult to understand. Also, one does not know much of them, and it requires more combination, more combinatory power, to transform the thought of the ancients and their systems into a modern thought, to present them in a modern style and yet to render them purely, meaning not to alter it."[vii]

The conceptions of the ancients must be transformed into [a] different expression, and yet in this process their thought must be preserved. I think one can say it is absolutely impossible to do. If you rewrite Aristotle in the language of modern philosophy, it is no longer Aristotle. And that is, I think, on the operating level, because in the *Philosophy of History* he doesn't make historical studies of his own; he takes the well-known broad facts and interprets them. But in his own *History of Philosophy*, of course, it is all based on his own reading and this is a historical work proper. That is, I think, an impossible procedure, while Hegel demands very sensibly that in understanding earlier thought we must really try to understand it as it was meant, and if we know that we must also see whether it was true or false, and the final interpretation would be the judgment on the truth or falsity, or the place which it occupies in the whole historical process. And the first step of course is to understand it as it was meant . . . by Plato, for instance. In fact, he never does that. He never does that. So from the point of view of the strictly historical, it is proper to say that Hegel is not historical enough, and this is bound to have grave consequences in particular as regards the *Philosophy of History*. That is quite clear. One can say that this "doing violence to the phenomena" enables him to present history as rational, of course, and that therefore it is really important to his own enterprise. Yes? I don't wish to leave any doubts at this—that I cannot agree with this whole procedure—but on the other hand, we must never forget what we can really learn from Hegel's penetration.

Then there is something else which we can easily forget. However inadequate quite a few things may be which Hegel said about earlier times, what happened between 1715 and 1800, this absolutely crucial epoch politically and intellectually, he knew of course first hand, and understood it in a way that perhaps no other individual understood it. And so if we want to find out something about the so-called Enlightenment and its transition there to German philosophy, Hegel is a very great authority, the authority of an extremely intelligent contemporary. You must never forget that. I believe the history of the Enlightenment also must be rewritten because Hegel looks at it too much from how it appears from Germany after Kant, but still at that time quite a few things were still visible which today have to be dug out with very great effort and to which one has some

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[vi] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: I: Greek Philosophy to Plato,* trans. E. S. Haldane (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 43.

[vii] I am unable to locate this exact quote in the *History of Philosophy,* but the some of the substance of it can be found on page 44.

guidance through Hegel. This is the reason, in my opinion, why even what Marx himself says about the nineteenth century is in many cases more profound than what we generally read in Western countries. This has not much to do with Marxist doctrine, but simply because Marx's doctrine was formed in a time when these opinions were more present and living. When we read today such people as Hobbes and Locke, for example, and even Rousseau, it is really ancient history; we know nothing of it, so to speak, before we open the book. But that was different a hundred years ago, and especially a hundred and twenty years ago, and especially for someone who had been trained by such a mind as Hegel's. It certainly was! We have to leave it at this. Next time we will hear a report on the *Logic*.

Session 13: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: Up to now you did as well as it was possible.[ii] Have you studied Hegel before?

Student: Yes, I had one course of about three weeks.

LS: Well, I think we can discount that. Now when you use the word "history" here, saying that on the one hand history and on the other hand phenomenology were appealed to in the introduction—"phenomenology" means of course the book of Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Mind*—what history meant was not quite clear to me.

Student: Oh, it means history of philosophy.

LS: History of philosophy, but more specifically, history of logic.

Student: Yes, particularly referring to Kant.

LS: Yes, but not only Kant.

Student: No.

LS: Now which are the stages of logic, disregarding any attempt at dialectical construction? Merely enumerate, first, second, and so on.

Student: Well, the first one, as I understand it, is the distinction between mind and objects.

LS: But more superficially, how is it known, this first stage of logic?

Student: Common sense.

LS: No, I don't believe it would ever be called that. Either you use a proper name and say Aristotle, or else you say formal logic. Second in Hegel's enumeration? What comes after?

Student: Well, Plato comes next.

LS: Yes, but he doesn't play any role here. I mean the most massive events in the history as mentioned by Hegel here.

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[i] This session on Hegel's *Logic* (announced at the end of the previous session) also appears as part of second lecture in the original transcript.

[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Student: Kant.

LS: Kant . . . And how is his logic called?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, as it calls itself?

Student: Transcendental logic.

LS: Transcendental logic. And third?

Student: Dialectical logic.

LS: Dialectical logic. Good. Now we have to understand that. The characteristic difference between Hegel's logic and all earlier forms of logic is that logic is identical with metaphysics, and we must try to understand what this means. Now in order to understand it from commonsense notions, without going into the subtleties of Hegel, let us start from a simple definition of philosophy. Philosophy is an attempt to understand all things. That is what Plato said, it is what Descartes said, and it is what they all meant if they didn't say it. The whole. Now this presupposes, in order to be meaningful, that the whole is intelligible; otherwise, it would not be understandable, intelligible. Now if this is so, it would seem that by understanding the intellect one would understand everything. If the whole is understandable, then by understanding the understanding one would seem to understand everything. Does this have a certain plausibility?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, no, Hegel would admit it, in his way. For example, could one not say that whatever we understand must go through that sieve, if I may say, the understanding? So if I know the sieve, I know everything which can go through that sieve—and that is the whole. That thought plays a very great role in modern philosophy long before Hegel and is in a very sophisticated way implied in Hegel. But we must proceed step by step. Now first of all, to come back to the characteristic assertion of Hegel that "logic is metaphysics," the understanding of understanding, let us provisionally say, is the overall understanding. The traditional view denied that. The older view distinguished between logic and metaphysics. Hegel refers to that old distinction. Now from this point of view, what was logic—from this older, say, traditional point of view, the Aristotelian point of view?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, that is too Hegelian. We must try to see it as it presents itself. What is formal logic? Hegel knew that very well, yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, that is what people say, and the most especially important part was syllogistic reasoning, which kind of combinations of judgments or propositions supply a conclusion and which do not. Formal meant—whatever it may have meant in Aristotle is a long question—in the ordinary view, that formal logic is indifferent to material truth. So if you say, "all men are angels, and angels have wings, therefore all men have wings," that is a formally sound conclusion. That the premises are wrong is not the business of logic. That would be the business of the "doctrine of angels," that is to say, a part of metaphysics. Yes? You can take any other examples you want. So now the question arises that if logic is only the forms of legitimate reasoning, where do we get the content?

Student: From other aspects of philosophy.

LS: But I mean, what are the sources of philosophy? If logic strictly speaking is not a source of knowledge but only something which is eminently helpful, how do you get these propositions that "all men are angels," if it were true?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, that was one school of thought; but the sensualistic was the least interesting to Hegel. The other view, say, the Platonic-Aristotelian view, made a distinction between reasoning and understanding—understanding, or intellection, or *nous* in Greek. It could be translated into the language with which Hegel was familiar as "intellectual intuition," perception by the intellect. The simplest example is this. When you make an empirical study of something and you have all kinds of data which you know, brute facts, and then at a certain moment, as people say, a pattern appears, our knowledge of the pattern is not simple sense perception of isolated things but it takes them together, gives them the unity. Perception of this pattern, intellectual perception, something of this kind, is what Plato and Aristotle meant by intellection, and reasoning is the connection which we made between the different data and such patterns.

From this older point of view, the Plato-Aristotle point of view, there was not possible a system. We have such patterns, very many such patterns, intellectually perceived, and we can observe a certain order among them but we cannot take one pattern and, moving merely among patterns, so to speak, exhaust the whole realm of patterns. Yes? Plato catches this as a possibility in the *Republic*, but that is really a kind of utopian proposal. What is in fact possible is that we get, always, these patterns by looking down to sense data, and then grasping the pattern we know there is another pattern. If you would read, for example, the *Statesman*, or the *Sophist*, where Plato gives a somewhat caricatured presentation of his procedure, you would see that whenever Plato gives a distinction between patterns, they look around and then they see, for example, that there are aquatic animals also, and then they rise to that. There is no movement merely among patterns. Yes? So therefore no system, properly speaking.

Now how do we go from here? Let us first consider Kant's transcendental logic. I would like to mention in passing that for [the] history of logic, another great event would have

to be mentioned which Hegel does not mention, and that is an attempt made at the reform of logic in the seventeenth century. A word used at that time by Bacon and such people for Aristotle's logic, form[al] logic, which was indeed necessary but "arid." That was the complaint. And we need a new kind of logic. Does anyone know how they called that?

Student: Material logic?

LS: No, no; inductive logic! That is a very complicated and difficult story, because induction was originally a great topic of rhetoric, and how this came to be called logic is a very complicated question. But we don't have to go into that. Now we come to Kant's logic, which accepts formal logic, and Kant says he didn't make any step beyond Aristotle in his perfect system. But this is the true philosophy, the true substitute for the impossible metaphysics. The true substitute, we could almost say according to Kant is the transcendental logic. Now what does that mean?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, one could put it that way. But starting from the simple schema which I sketched, the first step, we can say, of Kant—of course, preceded by the British philosophers—[is] that there is no intellectual perception. Intellectual perception is possibly that which God possesses, but that we do not know. Then, if man has no intellectual perception, the only perception which man possesses is sensible perception. This thesis is also Hegel's. Let us never forget that. The only way in which we are perceptive or perceive receptively is through sense perception. Or, if you please—that is not a fundamental difference—if you perceive your anger, you know, you do not perceive it by the external senses, but it has the same status cognitively. That would not be a fundamental difficulty. So to come back to Kant, how can there be such a thing as objective science if the only given things are sense data?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: In other words, by the activity of the human mind, an order is imposed on the sense data. Or to use the extreme formula of Kant, "The understanding prescribes to nature its laws."[iii] And transcendental logic is the doctrine which shows the production, the creation of the object of the understanding, generally speaking, the phenomenal world. The fundamental structure of the phenomenal world is a free creation of the human mind and of its essential character. This is what Kant calls "understanding." Kant changes the meaning of the term radically. He calls this "understanding," but what is reason, then, for Kant?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes, but that doesn't exist. Now let us try to understand this. From Kant's point of view, the pure understanding produces a form, a framework, but never the content. The

[iii] Again, see Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, §36; also *Critique of Judgment*, Preface, 4.

content is supplied by sense perception. But this faculty of man, pure thought, which shows itself primarily as pure understanding—that is what Kant means by the *a priori*—tries to know without the help of any sense perception. Yes? Understanding is always essentially in need of sense perception to be completed. Reason is not in need of it, he doesn't show that. Differently stated, the understanding supplies us with relative knowledge—this is the cause of that, and so on—and the question arises again as to what is the cause of the next thing, and that goes on infinitum. You never get the infinite; you only get finite or relative knowledge. Reason is concerned with the infinite, absolute knowledge. But this is impossible; it fulfills a certain secondary function for the human understanding—into which we do not go now—but it is in itself not cognitive. It fulfills the function of reminding us all the time of the limited character of the knowledge we possess, but that is almost all it offers. How can one prove that pure reason, as distinguished from pure understanding, cannot supply us any knowledge?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes. While the antimonies are only a part of this dialectic of pure reason—there are other things, for example, the demonstrations of the existence of God, which is not an antimony—the antimonies are certainly the most important things for Hegel. Kant as it were says that if pure reason tries to know, it fails necessarily, because it must prove that A is B, as well as that A is non-B. Pure reason can and must prove that the world must have a beginning in time and that the world cannot have a beginning in time. So Kant calls this "the dialectics of pure reason," "dialectics" in the common Aristotelian and Platonic sense in which it means "vulgarized," an art of delusions affected by arguments. Yes? Delusions! It has no cognitive character whatever. From this scheme of Kant it follows that knowledge is possible only where we have sense perception, although knowledge is always much more than sense perception. Without sense perception we do not get any content. There cannot be knowledge of spiritual things which by definition would not be perceived by sense perception. And the common notion, the vulgar notion, of metaphysics was that it was the science of spiritual beings, among others, God and the angels. That is altogether impossible. We have knowledge only where we have sense perception, and this knowledge is relative to the human understanding. It is knowledge only of the phenomenal world, the phenomenal world in this sense is distinguished from the thing-in-itself. What about the thing-in-itself according to Kant?

Student: Well, it can't be known.

LS: One can say, simplifying matters, that the impossibility of knowledge of the thing-in-itself is proven by the dialectics of pure reason, yes? The fact that pure reason necessarily contradicts itself in speaking about the absolute proves that the absolute, or in Kant's terms "the thing in itself," cannot be known. We have now come to the point where Hegel's again very "formal" schema comes in. What does Hegel reply to Kant?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: In other words, he turns the tables on Kant. Dialectics, far from being an objection to the possibility of knowledge, is a sign of true knowledge. Yes? That is surely what he says. Now Hegel accepts the Kantian distinction between understanding and reason. The understanding is ruled by the principle of contradiction, let us say, and therefore it arrives everywhere at opposites and everywhere at antinomies. There is no possibility of a unity, no possibility of a metaphysics. But what if this antinomian character of our understanding reveals to us precisely the unity of the whole? What if A and the opposite of A are the whole? You see then metaphysics would be possible.

One could also start as follows and say: Kant, you talk all the time of this transcendental subjectivity, this pure *ego cogito* in which the categories are rooted, or which works according to the categories. What kind of knowledge is that? In other words, what is the state of the knowledge embodied in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? Is this knowledge of the phenomenal world?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, not according to Kant. But it is not knowledge of the phenomenal world. You do not need sense perception for that. It is also said not to be knowledge of the noumenal world or of the thing-in-itself. But what is the status of this transcendental knowledge of the creative subjectivity, which, according to Kant, is the chief content of philosophy?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: You indicate by these remarks the subject matter of Kant's *Critique*, but not its cognitive status. It is neither sense perception, obviously, nor is it mathematics or theoretical physics. It is not in any way that kind of knowledge which Kant admits to be possible and which he analyzes in the *Critique*. One can simply, as well as Hegel's words, say as follows: Kant discovers the true thing-in-itself without knowing it: the transcendental subjectivity. In other words, the old metaphysics with the transcendental objects—God, angels, immortal souls, and whatnot—that is indeed impossible, although perhaps not always on Kantian grounds. That is uninteresting. But the true metaphysics, its field is discovered by Kant in the transcendental subjectivity. Then of course all the other elements have to be taken in, and then we arrive at the Kantian notion.

What is important in the present context is only this seemingly merely terminological point: Hegel accepts the Kantian distinction between understanding and reason. Understanding is that comprehension, that abstract comprehension which remains within the limits of the principle of contradiction. I mean by this our ordinary understanding. Reason transcends the limits of that understanding and becomes therefore concrete; it becomes aware of the concreteness, of the growing together, of the opposites. But it is definitely reason; there is no intellectual perception. I repeat the Hegelian remark: "Intuition is possible only of sensible things." The Hegelian "reason" is not the Platonic-Aristotelian *nous*. One must always be aware of that. Therefore, the subject of logic was from olden times logic in the sense of the Greek word *logizesthai*, putting two and two together. Yes? You have a certain pattern, and here's another pattern, and you put them

together. You do not get a new pattern by that, you get the composition of these two patterns. As Hobbes put it, "To reason means to reckon"[iv]—to add or subtract, compute, putting together, figuring out, and all these kinds of things are meant by that. And this was radically inferior to *nous*, which meant intellectual perception, intellection, or understanding, "understanding" in the sense of a literal translation of the old word. For Hegel the highest science, metaphysics itself, is logic, a logic however transcending the limits of the principle of contradiction. This much about the general meaning of Hegel's "logic."

Student: Could you give an example of the transcending of the understanding . . . of the principle of contradiction?

LS: Hegel would say "everything," but I have not mastered Hegel sufficiently to be able to do that, so I take the most simple example. If you think of "becoming," coming into being, what do we think in that? Hegel says we must analyze it. Coming into being is not being. But the opposite of being is nothing; that is an old Platonic story by the way. So whenever we have any interesting concept—for example, "cat as cat" is not philosophically interesting, but any of these fundamental concepts—according to Hegel they imply such a contradiction necessarily. Take the infinite versus the finite. If you make a distinction between the infinite and the finite, you delimit the infinite as excluding the finite, i.e., you conceive of the infinite as something finite, having a limit, and so on. And according to Hegel it is impossible to have any fundamental thought which does not have these contradictions. Hegel doesn't mean to say that I can say with equal right that this cat is green and that it is not green, that's clear, because in these finite limited things the principle of contradiction rules, of course. And even on the highest level these contradictions must ultimately lead to a whole system which by its completeness resolves the contradictions. Well, you know this thesis from common Marxism that every social order has contradictions within itself. Yes? And, for example, capitalism *is* a contradiction, feudalism *is* a contradiction; you cannot define them except in the form of a contradiction, and therefore contradiction is something real. You know that according to superficially understood notions of formal logic what contradicts itself cannot be. Marx or Hegel say that contradictions *are*, and therefore, to take this more simple Marxist case, they all point beyond themselves to an order in which all contradictions have been resolved. I mean that contradiction is a moving thing, contradiction is real, contradiction is that which moves, the "nerve of reality," but it is that which finally leads to the style beyond where the contradictions have been resolved. You know the controversy between Mao and Khruschev? Are there contradictions in present-day communism—you know, where Mao was willing to admit that there are and Khruschev denied it? This is a very late and somewhat funny consequence of the Hegelian assertion.

I have spoken up to now very provisionally about the relation of the two forms of logic, formal or transcendental and dialectical or Hegelian logic. Now this is related to another question to which Hegel refers, especially in this section. What is the beginning of history? And let us first try to understand this section and see whether we can link it up

[iv] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 5.

with this point that I made before. With what must the beginning of the science be made? What is the problem here? Let us read on page 203, bottom.

Student: "It has only recently . . . "[v]

LS: Now first one word about the substantive issue. Why can't the beginning be a mediate or an immediate?

Student: Because both of them are contained within . . .

LS: But Hegel says it is easy to show, so it shouldn't be too difficult. Now why can it not be something mediate? That is really very easy.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: No, but mediate presupposes something has been mediated, something has gone before. And why can it not be something immediate? He speaks of it later . . .

[No reply]

LS: Then he doesn't have a reason? Whenever you begin, a question arises as to why you begin with that. But more important for our purposes is the first sentence. Hegel doesn't say "recently," he says, "More recent times have become conscious that it is a difficulty to find a beginning in philosophy." Now this is a [retrospective][vi] speech. Why did not the difficulty exist in olden times? That will throw some light on Hegel. Let us read the next paragraph.

Student: "It is true that . . . "

LS: Well, if you take it more superficially, grammatically, the Greek word for principle, *arche*, means more primarily "the beginning." Yes?

Student: "but this beginning . . . "

LS: So in other words, in premodern philosophy the concern was, to take the simplest case, with what Hegel calls "the objective beginning," the beginning of all things, the highest principle, the first cause. Yes? And why was the beginning no problem then? I mean, the problem was then to establish what are the first causes, the highest causes, but why was the beginning therefore no problem? What was understood by "beginning"?

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[v] This is the first line of the section of Hegel's *Science of Logic* titled "With What Must the Science Begin." This section opens book 1 on "The Doctrine of Being." It is hard to know which edition of the *Science of Logic* Strauss is using, but all of the quotes that follow, most of them only partially audible, come from this opening section; see *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1969), 67-78.

[vi] In the original: "reasonative"

Student: The principles.

LS: No. A distinction was made between the beginning as principles and . . . which beginning?

Student: Well, the actual beginning . . .

LS: What do you mean by "actual beginning"? It is something very simple.

Student: Of philosophy.

LS: Of *inquiry*! Yes. So in other words, premodern philosophy made a distinction between the beginnings of inquiry and the beginnings of the things themselves. Therefore, Hegel says, the beginning of inquiry was not a problem. You begin anywhere you please. Anywhere! You observe strange artifacts, you observe an eclipse of the sun, you observe an atrocious crime, or a surprising revolution—anywhere, you can begin—or some strange contradictions which all men commit, and so on. The beginning is irrelevant. You can begin anywhere.

The fundamental distinction here, to which Hegel only alludes, is this: what is first by nature is not what is first for us. We seek what is first in itself, first by nature, but we live entirely in the derivative, not in the principles, and we start anywhere in the derivative where we are incited to thinking. Hegel overstates, I believe, the case considerably when he says it does not make any difference where one begins, because there may be a very great question whether one should not make a right beginning, in spite of the fact that the beginning of inquiry is surely the beginning only and not the end. And one can say this: In proportion that it is doubtful whether full knowledge of the principles, of what is first in itself is possible, the more responsible does the question of the true beginning of inquiry become. And that is probably why for Plato this question of the true beginning is so important, and the dialogues are, as dialogues, one could say, a development of the problem of the true beginning—because we have here in most cases real beginners. Think of the old generals who never thought about anything except their professional jobs and maybe how to manage their wives and children; they make a beginning guided by Socrates, and so on. But I do not want to insist on this point.

So we draw one conclusion. If in modern times the question of beginning has become so important, in modern times the distinction between the first in itself and the first for us has become questionable. Overstating it, the first in itself *is* the first for us, and then the question of the beginning becomes all-important. Now how could this be? Let us first find out what sense it makes to say that we begin at the absolute. How can we do that? I mean, we are sitting here, or maybe we are sitting in a drugstore, and so we are not at the absolute beginning. How could we come into a position that the beginning of our inquiry would be the beginning of everything, the principle of everything?

Student: Well, if we decided that the principle of everything is here . . .

LS: Yes, but that is too lofty to be intelligible at the present stage. We live entirely in the derivative: to repeat, in the caused rather than the causes. The ancient thinkers said: All right, let us ascend from the caused to the causes. But let us assume it is possible to jump from where we are to the highest principle, to the cause of everything. Then the beginning of inquiry would be what happens immediately after that jump, yes? When we are at the top. Now I quote to you a passage from Spinoza—don't be repelled by the theological formulation, because this could very well be expressed non-theologically, but the common word for the highest cause is God. Spinoza says we possess adequate knowledge of the essence of God . . . adequate knowledge of the essence of God![vii] Now if we possess adequate knowledge of the essence of God, we can of course begin with God and descend from God to his creations. So if you know the essence of God, you just proceed deductively from there, yes? I mean, that is a very schematic presentation of what Spinoza is trying to do, but something of this kind happened.

Now the classic example of the jump—no, it is much more than an example—the classic event of the jump is Descartes's "universal doubt." Here you doubt everything, which means you break completely with your ordinary understanding. Yes? This is a human being? You don't know. You see umbrellas in the street and your older habit makes you assume that these are human beings under them, but how do you know whether they are not robots, or disguised monkeys, or God knows that kind of thing? By virtue of this universal doubt, you discover what . . . according to Descartes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Yes. One could say this is the absolute beginning. What in Descartes is still not so clear? I mean, when you read Descartes's official argument, you arrive at the *ego cogito* and its ideas. And there is one idea of special importance: the idea of God. And then, starting from that, you restore the original certainty of sense perception and so on by the veracity of God, whatever this may be. But the philosophers preceding Hegel tried, [1]from the *ego cogito*, by the understanding of the *ego cogito*, to construct or reconstruct everything beginning at the absolute beginning. Hegel criticized this beginning with the ego, as we have seen, later. And he thinks it is not good enough. We may take this up later, but the formal character is the same, only Hegel digs much deeper, as we will see. Now let us read on through the third paragraph of this remark.

Student: —[viii]

LS: —it means also some innovation, yes? Some innovation. He says it explicitly. The first principle, meaning the first in itself, is also the beginning, meaning the first for us. And it appears to be first immediately on the basis of the Cartesian doubt, because then the visible world and the human beings in it cease to be the first for us because they are still questionable. And then you discover the *ego cogito*, which in Descartes is still very

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[vii] See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), part 2, proposition 47: "The human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God."

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

crude, but which reaches in Kant its fundamental clarity and has then to be developed on this basis.

Student: Sir, there is some fuzziness in my mind about why he would say Aristotle is not concerned with the problem of beginnings. I felt that the whole idea of arriving at a first principle, for Aristotle, is through his *Organon*, where he is concerned with how you ever get to first principles—cognitively, anyway. He seems pretty concerned with this problem.

LS: Yes, well I am sure that is a gross overstatement[2] [by] Hegel. But Hegel means that it is not "The Problem" for the ancients. I would also question this in regard to Plato. But we are now concerned only with trying to understand, first of all, what Hegel is driving at.

Now let us see whether we can put these two considerations together. How is this connected, this consideration, with Hegel's notion of logic as distinguished from both formal and transcendental logic? Do you see a clear way of stating it? I don't, but maybe some one of you can help me. You see, when you are confronted with a very difficult problem, it is wise to begin at various parts of it. You climb at various parts the mountain and try how far you can go without being unduly concerned at the beginning with a completely coherent account. But one should nevertheless be concerned with that at every stage.

Now let us take up one other point which was implied in what we said before. Hegel tries then to prove what is the beginning, yes? He tries to show what is the beginning. And the beginning, he says, is "being"; and the implication is that, starting from that, the whole realm of concepts will be exhausted without any "squinting" at sensibly perceived things. Yes? That is the point . . . I mean that is crucial. It is an absolutely *a priori* science, scientific in the highest sense of the term. The word scientific" occurs here all the time, as you will have noticed. But still, Hegel says, for example, that if people like most of us would then begin with, say, God—what a beginning!—I mean, what enormous preparations must we have made before we can even begin to understand. And Hegel himself says that this introduction is in a way no introduction; it is a kind of report of what he knows from someone who is at the top to the people in the plain, and these little things which I mentioned we can garner, and perhaps some others, but that is not enough. Must there not be a more elementary introduction? Is Hegel as a sensible and responsible man not compelled to reach us a ladder, a somewhat more solid and a somewhat more extensive ladder than the one which he gives in the introduction? As a matter of fact, this is Hegel's expression: "To present a ladder to the common consciousness," meaning to our ordinary way of thinking, and he did that because he was really a man of science and not a mere asserter. He tried to prove what he thinks.

What then is the beginning of the beginning, according to Hegel? And where did he do that? You spoke of it in your paper.

Student: *Phenomenology of the Mind*.

LS: Yes, the *Phenomenology of the Mind*. So in other words, the *Logic* is the second part of a work, the first part of which is the *Phenomenology of the Mind*. And only in the *Phenomenology* does he begin at the absolute beginning. Let us read on page 204, paragraph three.

Student: ". . . is presupposed by logic."

LS: Yes, let us keep this in mind. In a very important respect the *Logic* is not pre-suppositionless in that it presupposes the *Phenomenology of the Mind*. And then he says?

Student: ". . ."

LS: Yes. And so on. Now Hegel begins there really with the kind of knowledge which we as naive men regard as the most solid thing which can be, namely . . . for example, "now it is dark," or "this is a red blouse," and so on. And then he tries to show that without doing anything, by mere observation of what is going on, how these truths transform themselves into untruths—that is to say, they destroy themselves—and by virtue of this a higher form of knowledge appears. Mere sense perception has no stability, no solidity, but it transforms itself into a higher one, and this goes on in an ever larger circle until all possibilities of consciousness have been exhausted, and finally we reach the end in what Hegel calls "the [abolition][ix] of the consciousness." That is, he says that the distinction between subject and object have been abolished, so that pure knowledge is thinking of thinking and no longer thinking by a subject about an object.

So Hegel does admit then that there is a natural, an absolute beginning; and that he takes to be pure sense perception. And that would be a question, whether this is really the beginning. You remember what he says later on about those who begin with the *ego cogito*? Remember what he says against them?

[No reply]

LS: Well, the *ego cogito* is no true beginning; it is already presupposing an enormous reflection. Let me see if I can find that. "That which makes the absolute beginning must be something already known; and the pure ego is not already known, it emerges by virtue of a complicated reflection."[x]

Now the question therefore is whether the isolated sense perception, the sticking to the here and now perceived, is not already also the product of a reflection, and whether one would not have to begin much earlier. I mean, for example, the way in which Plato begins in the dialogues, the kind of beginning which Hegel sometimes complains of as being a bit tedious because after all, we know a long time ago already when we hear the question, "What is virtue?" We don't need examples in order to understand the meaning

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[ix] In the original: "opposition"

[x] Though I cannot locate this exact quote, Hegel's rejection of the pure ego as the true beginning of philosophy appears in the *Science of Logic*, 75-77.

of the question. So the question of the beginning is really a very important question, perhaps beyond what Hegel himself meant.

But I would like now to turn to another question, because we must try to link this up somehow with what we have read in the *Philosophy of History*. Let us turn to page 207, last paragraph.

Student: ". . . must be mere seeking."

LS: Now let us stop here for the moment. Do you understand the problem which he raises now? Hegel demands an absolute beginning, but why does he demand that in the first place? I mean, let us reflect on what we know of the beginnings of such sciences or scientific pursuits with which we are familiar. There must be a beginning, clearly. The very idea of an orderly procedure requires a beginning, and that beginning is not, perhaps, altogether arbitrary. But with what do we usually begin? I mean, the systematic presentation of a science, or for that matter a particular scientific inquiry of any kind, requires that we begin, not unnaturally, with something.

Student: With a hypothesis.

LS: Yes. I think the most ordinary case is that we begin with accepted views. We start from some accepted views, which in some cases we say have been proven before—which is a somewhat dangerous procedure because it admits, in a way, to "passing the buck." You know, in all cases we have not really examined that, but so what? It's wiser to say we begin with accepted opinions, at least as to what is an important question. But we begin with something given. Even if you take an ordinary mathematical deductive system, you begin with certain axioms, postulates, and so on which are also given; you do not give their reasons, and you cannot give their reasons. Now this is according to Hegel, on the highest level of thought, impossible. Nothing given can be accepted, it must be an absolute, *a priori* construction. But this leads to a very great difficulty. Let us assume that your beginning is as good as it may be. Say it is what Hegel means to begin with, "being unqualified." What is the obvious defect, that is, what is Hegel dealing with here?

[No reply]

LS: I mentioned it before. There cannot be a reason for that, because if there is a reason for that, the reason is the beginning, and then that goes on *ad infinitum*. Now let us turn to the next paragraph.

Student: "if it is considered . . ."

LS: Well, extremely stated, the beginning is groundless, and the process is a turning to the ground, yes? This is so. But Hegel goes on to say, or already implies here, that since there is also movement from the groundless to the grounded, it is a complete cycle. The question is only how this will look in practice. Yes? Now let us see.

Student: " . . ."

LS: Now let us stop here. Now that is very hard to understand, but we can introduce one word, one Hegelian term, which may help. The beginning is poor, as we have seen, the poorest; and the end is the richest, and as the richest, it supplies the full ground of the whole movement from the beginning to the end. But in another way the whole movement and also this rich end is contained in the beginning, yes? As he puts it here so strongly: "The beginning remains the foundation for everything following. The process does not consist in that only something other is derived, or that there takes place a transition into something truer, it is the same."[xi] Now Hegel means here a phenomenon which we all know and which is a simile and not only a simile of the old historical work. Do you know an example, an everyday example, of some very poor beginning with a very rich end, where everything following from that rich end is contained in the beginning, and in a way, once you have reached that end, there is a return to the beginning?

Student: An oak tree.

LS: Yes, the seed of a plant. The seed contains the whole oak tree and all of the stages between: we get an oak tree, and then we get a new seed, and so on. So therefore we can say that the end has a double meaning: the purpose, and that for the sake of which . . . or to use another old distinction, the potency and the act. That this is what Hegel means is true, and yet this also shows that the beginning is not arbitrarily stated. We can begin at any stage of the oak tree and come around, but it is not arbitrarily stated that the real beginning in time in this process is the seed.

Now let us consider this process. We must understand this a bit better in order to come back to the *Philosophy of History*. This is a so-called teleological process. I mean, it is in the thing to become the object; there is no external cause making the thing become the object, nor does the seed know that it will become the object. What about the human mind? Let us think about the human mind known to us empirically to same extent. There is a seed-like condition, say, of the newborn child, and then there is Aristotle, for example. Did Aristotle know of Hegel? He could [not] have known, according to Hegel. Yes? How then does the development take place in the history of the human mind? Do people have a clear vision of the truth, or for that matter even a clear vision of the problem? Say it like this, like the simplistic notion of progress: there is the beginning of the thing, and here is the full truth. They all know the end point and the problem, but they don't have the solution; they only know that one solution is superior to the one preceding it, but in the formation of the problem they would all agree.

That does not happen in the human mind, Hegel says. So what happens in each case? I mean, this process is in a way a blind process. People arrive at a solution theoretically or socially, and it doesn't make any difference. That is the end to it. But then new problems arise theoretically or socially. First of all, they try to push them under the carpet, but then the problems assert themselves all the more strongly, and then something emerges which not even the dissatisfied knew what it was. What I'm driving at is this, and it applies

[xi] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 71.

immediately to Hegel's logic. Hegel does not proceed with the end. Begin this way, he says: this is complete knowledge, the absolute truth. Now, looking at that, I build up the various stages. The procedure is this, if I may present it pictorially[xii]: here is the end, but I don't look at it; I look only at the beginning, and then I see how this beginning necessarily leads to something else; and then without looking at the end and *only* without looking at the end does the true end come into sight and emerge. The true end does not exist in any way prior to the process.

Now let us look again at this distinction between potency and act. How is the transition between potency and act effected according to Aristotle, or for that matter according to Plato?

Student: By a process of growth.

LS: But what would Aristotle say? Who or what generates man?

Student: Man.

LS: No! He had something? Man and his son! So in other words, while surely man *is*—the baby is meant to become a grown-up man—yet there are other things also necessary. The son, for example, yes? But what about the actualization of knowledge? A baby has a very potential intellect. How does it become an actual intellect?

Student: By thinking.

LS: Not actualized. Yes?

Student: He is taught by his parents.

LS: Yes, but let us take the simple general formula which dispenses with so much thinking but indicates the problem. In *De Anima*, what does Aristotle say? What do you need apart from this? The active intellect. An agent is needed to transform the potential into the actual.[xiii] One can say that this is the difference between Hegel and Plato-Aristotle. There is no external agent in any sense for Hegel. I mean, he wouldn't deny that in the case of plants, but as far as the mind is concerned there is no external agent. I remind you of another Aristotelian formula: "Everything which is moved is moved by something else." This "something else" is not here. Now you can say Plato speaks of the soul as self-moving, but in the decisive respect there is no difference, as is shown by the broadest considerations. What is according to the massive Aristotelian teaching the cause of motion, of *all* motion?

Student: The first cause.

LS: How does he call it?

[xii] Strauss may have written on the blackboard at this point.
[xiii] Aristotle, *De Anima*, book 3, chapter 5.

Student: God, the first mover.

LS: . . . and? "The unmoved mover." How does he move?

Student: How does God move? You mean move other things?

LS: Yes.

Student: I couldn't answer.

LS: Well, there is a simple formula which Aristotle uses: "As the beloved."[xiv] Perfection elicits the motion of everything else, everything else being less perfect—the same as you have in Plato in "the idea of the good," you know? So there is a perfect being, unmoved, never undergoing any change, as the condition of any actualization of potency. *That* is what Hegel denies. Motion, change, is the absolute; and therefore you have already the first step toward his *Philosophy of History*. There is no longer any notion that the world of change *par excellence*, the world of history, is philosophically uninteresting, which is Plato and Aristotle's traditional view. History, the world of change, is a part and a most important part of the inner life of the absolute, of God. God has become man, to use the Christian formula. And that means, as we have seen from the *Philosophy of History*, that this process leading up to Christianity—you know, the connection with the Roman Empire and the whole prehistory—and Christianity itself, via the Revolution and the Reformation, is done not only by God's help, as he says at the end of the book, but is the work of God upon himself, meaning it is part, and the most important part, of the divine activity and therefore of the divine essence.

One can also try to present the very general character of Hegel's *Logic* as follows, disregarding for one moment the dialectic, because it does not affect what I am going to say. Hegel starts from the beginning, "pure being," and then in a deductive process, a dialectically deductive process, he arrives at the end without looking at the end. It is a non-teleological process which at the end proves to be teleological. Now this view has been well prepared on a much more practical and commonsensical plane: When, without considering the end, without looking in any way at the end, you act on behalf of the end; and in fact, *only* without looking at the end will you truly promote the end. Adam Smith! There are others, but leave it here. You take care of the common good by not thinking of the common good. The common good is the outcome of activities not tending consciously toward the common good as the outcome. I don't want to minimize the differences between Hegel and Adam Smith, but this formal character is in common. Hegel refers to Adam Smith and shows the connection also between this and modern physics. I have forgotten now, the formulation, and I don't want to misquote it.

Now Hegel has a formula here in the introduction to the *Logic* which you did not quote. He uses the theological paraphrase for what the *Logic* is about. Do you remember that? It is a description of God prior to the creation of the world. So if Hegel had elaborated the

[xiv] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072b.

whole work as he planned to do, and which he did do to some extent in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophic Sciences*, the whole edifice would consist of logic, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of the finite mind, the human mind. Then nature and man are the creations, of course. The theological language in Hegel is very ambiguous because it is and is not what the theologians meant. But the crucial point is that this is not strictly speaking a free act, as it is in the tradition, the traditional sense being that God could as well as could not have created the world. That is the Thomistic doctrine, which is absolutely strict. Because otherwise creation is a necessity for a good God, yes? Is that clear? Therefore the world does not act an atom of the available good. For Hegel, that is clearly different. The beginning is the poorest, and only by creation of nature and above all by the historical process in its culmination is God fully God. This is already indicated in the general character of the *Logic*.

I would like to mention one point among many others which should be mentioned. It is a strictly immanent process. There is no external agent nor external end eliciting the process. And this true being will prove to be mind. Now let us think primarily of the human mind, the mind which we know something about; that is to say that in particular in the development of the human mind, it is autonomous. Well, look in the *Philosophy of History*: there are no political causes, no economic or climatic causes. These are only concomitants or so. The true causes are the inner needs of the human mind which is dissatisfied with a certain state and transcends it. This is an autonomous development of the human mind.

This notion is older than Hegel, and there is a classic formulation for this view at an earlier stage, of a perfectly autonomous development of the mind without any outside movements. Does anyone remember that? Leibniz. What does he say? What are the monads? The monads are spiritual automata, meaning automatic. There is no outside influence. And they are windowless: they contain everything within themselves. Leibniz praised his doctrine; he has said many things in praise of his doctrine. He has a charming naiveté in these natters, as when he says "my banishment of death"—he, Leibniz, has banished death! That occurs all the time. Now the point to which I referred runs as follows. Leibniz speaks of a spontaneity little known hitherto, of the soul. In all earlier doctrines, the soul was much more dependent on external agents: to give a very simple case, sense perception, which means dependence on external agents. Whatever Leibniz may have meant by that, certainly that is his point—the spiritual automaton, without windows, developing entirely by its own inner dynamics.

What made Leibniz's proposal so attractive? Because if someone told this to any commonsensical human being, he would think it was a funny and crazy idea. But under certain conditions, it seemed to be the solution to a terrible problem. What is the alternative to the monad, to the windowless monad? An influence of external agents, especially bodies, on the soul. The old and commonsensical notion that there exists a physical influence, an influence of the body on the soul, and of course the other way around. Of the influence of the body on the soul you have infinite examples. For example, if you are shot, this has all kinds of consequences for your state of mind, yes? You could perhaps take some probably more common occurrence. Now what was the

serious difficulty with the influence of body and soul and vice versa which common sense seems to prove every moment?

Student: Well, they are distinct things, and how does one influence the other?

LS: Yes, but why should not distinct things influence one another?

Student: Well, if they are distinct, how can they be alike enough to exert influence?

LS: There is something in what you say. But differently stated, if the clear and distinct concept of body contains nothing of soul, and if the clear and distinct concept of soul contains nothing of body, then an influence can never become intelligible. Yes? But in practice it meant that modern physics required a completely closed system of conservation of energy; and if at a certain stage it seemed that merely the energy is preserved, it is all right—so the soul can give only a new direction. But in the more developed form, in Leibniz's dynamics, even the direction had to be understood in terms of the closed physical system. And therefore the solution which offered itself was first psycho-physical parallelism. You know? If a house is built, this process must be entirely understood in terms of bodily motions; you cannot speak of thoughts of an architect and all this kind of thing. That is what Spinoza explicitly said. And on the other hand, there is a parallel process of a psychic nature; in the extreme form, it is the so-called epiphenomenalism which says that the only real stuff is the bodily processes, and they are in some parts of matter accompanied by some strange momentary lights called consciousness. Until the nineteenth century this was really absolutely overpowering in so-called scientific psychology. This is now in the process of change.

Now in this connection, in connection with the perfectly lucid account, the mathematical account, of the universe as a self-contained physical system, there had to be found the soul. It had to be equally self-contained. But since the soul is not, as Spinoza liked to think, like matter, namely, one system of matter, one system of thoughts, because there are infinite systems of thought, infinite individuals; therefore Spinoza's doctrine didn't suffice. As Leibniz himself put it, "Spinoza would be right if there were no monads." And that *is* it. Therefore, there had to be windowless monads which were spiritual automata. It is very hard to say—that is one of the most difficult questions in understanding modern philosophy—what is the cause and what is the effect. Is the cause a purely physical consideration stemming from physics which, since mind cannot be denied in the long run, must be construed in accordance with a presupposed physical system? Or are these very powerful and loaded assertions regarding the spontaneity hitherto unknown of the mind not as fundamental as the physical system is?—a question which I think we all comes across at all stages, but more clearly in the seventeenth century. You know? Whether it is a new feeling of man of himself, or whatever people call it, or whether these are not secondary, if exciting, consequences of a purely theoretical pursuit—the development of Galileo and Newton, Newtonian physics. I imagine one must start from both sides if one wants to understand it.

But once this is settled, this question of the spiritual automation, of the spontaneity of the mind not requiring an external agent, either body or God . . . I exaggerate a bit, because the central monad is of course very important, God. In Leibniz it means that this monad could not be that if it had not been built by the creator in such a way that it would work, so that God has coordinated the two systems. Later on, Kant uses his key term "spontaneity of the understanding" as the crucial term in the *Critique of Pure Reason*; and this "spontaneity of the understanding" is only an inkling of the freedom of practical reason, a reason not bound by any data whatever, any natural inclinations, or any "nature of man," but exclusively by its own inner law, namely, as practical reason it must be rational, i.e., the laws which it produces must have the formal character of universality, and that is all there is to it. This is behind the Hegelian notion, only Hegel demands much more of reason and expects more of reason than Kant ever did.

What we could do here today was of course only to give some points from which we can climb up this big mountain, and we must go on from here. Next time we will hear a paper on Hegel's teaching on the state in his *Philosophy of Right*.[xv]

[1] Deleted "to was"
[2] Deleted "of"

[xv] No such session devoted to the *Philosophy of Right* appears in the original transcript.

Session 14: no date[i]

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —the question is only whether they hit Hegel.

Student: No, they don't. I should make the point that the historical position certainly doesn't apply to Hegel.

LS; Yes, but we must perhaps try to clarify that. I think you made one technical mistake in your paper.[ii] You made an attempt to climb up Mount Everest, when there were some hills around in which you would have acquired some . . . You would have found out more than you did in this unsuccessful attempt to climb Mount Everest. What I mean is this. In the *Philosophy of History* Hegel links up the facts known to every schoolchild to a very radical and profound philosophy. But in speaking about these well-known things, say, the difference between Lutheranism and Catholicism, there is intelligibility, there is no difficulty. Now by having tried to ascend from these intermediate statements, say, what the Reformation meant in Hegel's interpretation, you would not have been compelled to go up straight to this height of heights, his concept of freedom—which is, I am sure, wholly unintelligible to someone who reads it for the first time because it presupposes knowledge of Kant's philosophy, to put it very simply. And I don't blame you for one moment for not succeeding in understanding it.

Student: I hope I have succeeded in understanding it for myself.

LS: I don't believe so, because as you stated, it is simply shocking to common sense; there is no place from which we in our ordinary understanding of freedom could recognize anything. I will give you an example. In the book *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, by Reichenbach,[iii] which I read last year, this man begins, in order to show that you have to be scientific, with a quotation from Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. And then he says that this is the nonsense to which you arrive if do not proceed scientifically but rather metaphysically, as Hegel does. Well, if you read this sentence from the English translation of the *Philosophy of History*, you can't blame him. But if one knows a bit about Hegel, one knows that it is not nonsense—but otherwise it reads like nonsense. And it is not wise to begin from that point, because Hegel really began and even ended with propositions which are not simply abstruse and meaningless, and one must . . . What you said about freedom is, I believe, unintelligible to most students here. I don't say to all, but to most I would say without any hesitation. I will come to that.

But you had here a clear plan, supplied by the fact that Hegel deals in this section with two big events, the Reformation and the French Revolution. And according to Hegel there is a link between these two. The problem poses itself in purely empirical terms as follows: How come that the Revolution broke out in France and not in Germany? And he gives the answer made popular by Carlyle, that the Germans and the English had the

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[i] The material in this session comes from the first part of lecture 11 in the original transcript.
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[iii] Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (1951).

Reformation for their Revolution.[iv] So in other words, the principle which had to be established with such violence in France was established in Germany and England with much less violence. Let me put it this way: this was certainly true in Germany, mainly by the Reformation.

Now the question is then: What is that principle which is common to the Reformation and the Revolution? Hegel says "freedom," surely. But freedom is a word of many meanings, and therefore is in a way a meaningless word, a useless word, unless we say more precisely what we mean. Now in what sense could the Reformation be said to be a move for freedom—I mean, from what you know of the Reformation, say, of Luther? Luther, you must know, was an authoritarian.

Student: Well, recognition of individuality, or more so than was then present.

LS: Yes, but this is a word which doesn't occur in Luther. But what are the acknowledged principles of the Reformation, of the Lutheran Reformation that everyone knows?

Student: Faith?

LS: Faith alone. Very good! So one thing we learn then is that the seat of freedom is the inner self of man. Yes? In this sense it is meant.

Student: With Hegel's[1] [interpretation] of freedom, what we learn from the Reformation is that he has defined God, Christ, as the seat of . . .

LS: Let us not go into these subtleties. Let us stick to the surface: faith alone. In other words, a process in the human mind alone is that which is the seat of freedom, and everything else depends on that. What is missing here, so that the Revolution was still necessary? Because while Hegel says the Germans did not need the Revolution, on the other hand he makes it clear that the real important change in Germany was effected not by the Reformation but as a consequence of the Revolution. This means, in plain English, that to some extent the Protestant nations too needed the Revolution. So what was missing in the Reformation?

Student: The content. The content and rationality are the two . . .

LS: Let us be more precise. We have seen that freedom is . . .

Student: The rights of man.

LS: The rights of man. But what is the difference between the rights of man and the freedom of belief, between faith and the rights of man? The freedom of belief was secured in principle according to Hegel under the Reformation. But what is the difference between freedom of faith, or "the freedom of the Christian man" as Luther called it?

[iv] Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (1837).

Student: Well, Hegel makes the statement in this section that while Luther expected that everyone would accept Christian Revelation as being the ultimate truth, what the Revolution did was to make the truth more in terms of what was absolute or rational to man himself.

LS: Still more simply, Luther had a very famous writing titled *The Freedom of the Christian Man*, and the "rights of man" were the freedoms of man as man, not as Christian. In other words, what was originally limited to religion or, to use another term, limited to inwardness, had to become externalized; and that was through the French Revolution and its consequences. And here these reflections come in. I admit it was difficult to follow here because Hegel sometimes mentions very heterogeneous facts, facts close to the center and facts which are more peripheral, and you must see which are together. When he speaks about the witches and he has a long discussion about the witch trials, that has not the same central importance as what he says about the inwardness of the Lutherans, the concern with the purity of intentions instead of with actions. Yes?

Student: I didn't mention it, but I considered that the whole section can be rather dialectic. First you have the externality, then the turn inward, and the remedy for the inwardness is then the reconciliation of the inwardness and the outwardness.

LS: One would have to say this. First, there was a false externality in the Middle Ages Catholicism: the Crusades. And we discussed that last time. The failure of the Crusades meant the realization that the reconciliation cannot be found through any externals. Luther stated this clearly and successfully. But this inner reconciliation, that is Hegel's point, must issue in externality—not the externality of pious works, but in the externality of moral and political action. The Reformation saw, rightly, that the root of the whole thing is the inner man, but it did not see that this alone is the true reconciliation. Yes?

Student: But isn't Hegel's point that the inner man is projecting himself at all times throughout history, and that is why we can understand history in terms . . .

LS: But not *knowing* it!

Student: No, of course not. But . . .

LS: But now he knows it. If you take the Persians, or whatever you want, the Persian religion is a projection of the Persian folk mind; but the Persians don't know this and therefore they are not free. The modern man, and in a sense the post-Revolutionary man, knows that this is his projection, and therefore he is free. So one little point of clarification we gained by this step is that freedom is not possible without consciousness of it.

Student: Well, that is the will itself which becomes conscious of what is identical with itself.

LS: Yes. Let us proceed step by step. I mention a few points which you made in your paper. The difference between Germany and England, regarding the Reformation. Now Hegel does not labor that, and does not elaborate it even in the German translation, but we all know who initiated the Reformation in Germany. Who initiated the Reformation in England?

Student: The king.

LS: Sure. And in England it led to Anglicanism, which means a minimum deviation from Catholicism according to the original idea. The principle was not affected. In Germany the principle was affected by the Lutheran Reformation, which meant not merely a break with the ecclesiastical hierarchy but with the key teachings of the Church. And in England, Anglicanism is inconsistent, which the Anglicans regard as an advantage—[v]

—the fact that Britain has no written constitution—the famous things; and the high degree of self-government and decentralization in England. This all did not jibe with Hegel's notion of a rational state.

Student: I felt that he was really going out on a limb when he said that there was not freedom but that these private rights were feudal.

LS: No, the principles involved are the point.

Student: But he also gives the right of primogeniture as an example of . . .

LS: Well, of course the great examples here are the rotten boroughs,[vi] the way in which it is openly admitted that the votes are bought, the squire inviting his tenants to get drunk at his expense and so forth, so that in that drunk condition they go to the polls. That was absolutely shocking. What does this mean? Was this a free people conscientiously making up its mind as to its representation in the national assembly? There is a point there, but you could say, as many people say today, that since you never get a really rational state, let us have innocent travesties rather than shocking ones. And that is a very good point for practical purposes, but one must also see the problem here.

Student: Couldn't one charge Hegel with taking advantage of history in condemning England on something like that?

LS: But is it not true that in England there was, at least up to Hegel's time, not any codification of the law? There was codification in Prussia, even in the old Prussian monarchy of 1797, which was really the work of Frederick the Great. And all these

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[v] The tape was changed at this point.

[vi] Boroughs are administrative divisions within the United Kingdom; "rotten" boroughs were ones which had declined in population but still elected a parliamentary representative, usually a wealthy landowner. The Reform Act of 1832 introduced changes to the electoral system that abolished such boroughs and increased the electorate.

attempts to have a rational order were made on the European continent in connection with European rationalism generally. In England, this was postulated to some extent by Hobbes, partly, who demanded that this be done at that time already. And then it was demanded by the utilitarians. But somehow the British philosophy in Hegel's point of view was connected with this easy-going muddling through, instead of this clear and distinct Cartesian content which Hegel in his way accepts, only transforms.

Now we have seen the great "by faith alone" which is Old Testament, but the crucial point is that now it became clearly opposed to the letter of James, you know, which Luther practically rejected at that early time, and which he said was a "straw epistle." In other words, it was arid, spiritually poor, compared with the Pauline letters. So, faith alone. And now if we make a jump which Hegel makes, what happened after the Reformation? After the Reformation we see what is necessary is to transform this inwardness into an inwardness issuing into action in institutions. That did not yet happen. The decisive step according to Hegel is the French rationalism, and the key figure is of course Descartes. These are the things which Hegel doesn't produce, they are there. Now Descartes has really this formula in his *Meditations*. Knowledge. What we want to know is bodies, things; and we know them of course by imagination and sense perception, but that of course is not true knowledge. The true knowledge is knowledge by the mind alone. "By the mind alone" is a higher state than "by faith alone." But Hegel contends that it was necessary to go over from "by faith alone" to "by mind or thought alone," because there is still a dependency on externals in "by faith alone," simply proven by the famous formula of the Reformation: "the inner testimony of the Holy Ghost." Yes? That is absolutely necessary. But the "inner testimony of the Holy Ghost" is not sufficient according to the official teaching of Luther and Calvin. What else do you need?

Student: Well, I know there is a theology as well.

LS: Yes, but more specifically? According to the strict doctrine? The Book. The Scriptures. So you don't know that it is the "testimony of the Holy Ghost" if it does not agree with the Bible, yes? The Holy Ghost in you must confirm the truth of the Bible and vice versa, and this created all kinds of troubles. The Reformation was compelled to accept not only the Bible but the First Council's decisions. Yes? And then they were driven by the more radical people to the text of the New Testament, and this could lead to the denial of the Trinity and infinite other consequences. And then finally the question came of how we can know whether the whole book was inspired verbally. All this kind of thing came out of that, and at the end you had in this process transformed "the inner testimony of the Holy Ghost" into the pure mind, the pure thought, which is no longer in any sense faith. And the classic representative of this is Descartes. Now let us leave it for the moment at pure mind.

At this stage there are two possibilities. One was graceful and elegant, and that was the Cartesian solution: a province of pure mind, human reason exerting itself in mathematics and physics and so on; and in another compartment of the same individual, a believing Catholic. Yes? And Hegel says that this is not possible, this is not possible in the unity of man, and therefore the fundamental insufficiency of the French solution is revealed by

this dualism. And on a concrete level it leads then to the other solution, which is in a way consistent: the Enlightenment, which accepts Descartes's rationalism but denies his adherence to Catholicism. Then you get the *Encyclopedie* and all these people who throw out religion altogether: a materialistic philosophy. And here Hegel says a deeper reflection had to begin which showed the inadequacy of the materialistic-atheistic philosophy and which, after it was completed—and it was completed in Hegel—revealed the inner truth of Christianity. This inner truth of Christianity is then a purely rational teaching for which there are no longer any mysteries of faith—which we have heard from time to time in this course.

Now the technical expression of that is this. The French rationalism or its equivalent—which existed at that time more or less in all the other countries, only the French were the most famous for it—is the complete development of the understanding. But the understanding is not the highest possibility of man. The highest possibility of man is called by Hegel, as it is called by Kant, "reason." Understanding remains wholly within the limits of what is called identity and contradiction, as Hegel states it here. Reason goes beyond these principles insofar as it recognizes—that is at least Hegel's formula for it—the unity underlying the contradictions. And this is dialectical. This essentially dialectical reason can alone save the truth of Christianity, but it transforms the truth of Christianity from a thing believed into a thing known. That is what Hegel claims.

Now in this transition from French rationalism, needless to say, every historian would say that Hegel is begging all the questions, because Luther and Calvin would have turned in their graves if someone would say that the Enlightenment is a necessary development from the Reformation. One can very well say that medieval scholasticism is infinitely more receptive to reason, especially the Thomistic Scholasticism, than Luther and Calvin. That has been said many times by the more careful students of the Reformation; but let us now limit ourselves to this crucial transition from France to Germany, which means here of course no longer a merely external thing but the transition from early modern rationalism to German Idealism. And this indeed turns all around the word "will." "Man is will," Hegel says. What does this mean? I will try to explain it as follows. The term "freedom of the will" is of course very old and was always used. The ordinary meaning was in the sense of the *librium arbitrium*, the commonsense meaning of that term. What does this mean, starting from the ordinary fact that we regard ourselves and others as responsible for actions, yes? Now when someone commits a murder and we say he is responsible for it, what do we mean? He could have comitted that deed. He could have committed it and he did, but he also could have refrained from doing it; otherwise he would not have been responsible. This undecidedness: he was not compelled by anything but his decision, otherwise it would not have been a decision and he would not be responsible. If something in him, an urge, compelled him, then he is a madman, he is not responsible. This is what is implied in the ordinary meaning of responsibility, and this is what Aristotle develops in his discussion in the *Ethics*;[vii] and this was accepted, fundamentally, by the more moderate theological traditions. I say "more moderate" because there was also the problem of predestination and divine omniscience, and we

[vii] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 3, chapters 1-5.

cannot go into these abysses now. Let us leave it at the simple notion of the freedom of choice which is implied in the idea of responsibility on a commonsense basis.

Now one thing must be emphasized at this point. If we call this moral freedom—that we are responsible for our actions—this moral freedom has nothing whatever to do with political freedom. One must never forget that. The traditional notion that a slave can be a good man makes this perfectly clear. If moral freedom were inseparable from political freedom, there could not be a moral slave, and it was generally admitted that there can be a moral slave. For example, if the master commands him to do an immoral act and he refuses to do it, even if the master kills him, he is still free. That it is hard to be moral if you are a slave is another matter, a matter of degree, but essentially moral freedom has nothing to do with political freedom. That is the traditional view.

Looking forward to Hegel's view, we see immediately that in Hegel's case moral freedom has to be inseparable from political freedom, whatever political freedom may be in Hegel. As a thesis we may say that political freedom was that you have a say in all limitations and you are not bossed around by anyone. Limitations of freedom are called laws. You are a free man if you participate somehow in the making of the laws, yes? That is what is called political freedom. And this implies certain other things as a matter of course: there must be some freedom of speech, and some freedom of assembly, and so on if this is going to work. One does not have to labor these very obvious things. Now what is the great change? I mention another point: you can have political freedom without having moral freedom proper. Is this possible?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: At least on the face of it, you can have political freedom without admitting moral freedom.

Student: Not in Hegel.

LS: We are not in Hegel, we are still trying to climb one of these small hills. Mount Everest comes later, if you please. The first philosopher I know of who can be said to be a defender of liberal democracy was Spinoza. He was certainly in favor of political freedom, but he denied moral freedom. There is only a strict necessitarianism, which means that, for example, if I choose murder and another fellow chooses non-murder, each is necessary. There is no freedom of choice. Yes? So that is also possible, at least on the face of it. The philosophic objections cannot be raised now, we can only understand the general assertion.

Now what is the decisive step? The decisive step is that made by Kant. In Kant there is one formula which says everything: "Practical reason and will are the same, identical." The traditional view, the commonsense view, is this. In order to act rightly you must really *choose* the right action; for example, if you are compelled to behave like a decent man by someone standing over you and slapping you if you behave indecently, then you are not a decent man. You must really freely choose the right behavior. But on the other

hand, this freedom of choosing requires a content, and this content is not supplied by the will but by the reason, more specifically the practical reason. Yes? Is this clear?

Now let us see what Kant has done. Kant raises this question: Where does this content come from? The tradition answers that man has natural inclinations toward self-preservation, society, knowledge, and whatnot. Yes? Natural inclinations. These natural inclinations in a way supply the content. The inclinations precede your will; you are by nature inclined toward something, and this is the basis on which you choose. But then the will is absolutely derivative because you do not choose your inclinations. You only choose something on the basis of your inclinations. Differently stated, you are at all times under the tutelage of nature; nature directs you toward something, so you are not truly free. Kant stated the problem as follows. The traditional notion assumes that the natural inclinations are good. How do we know that? We would have to know what is good in order to say that the natural inclinations are toward the good. Where do we get this knowledge of the good? It must be from some other source, and that can only be reason, if it is to be rational knowledge. But on what is the declaration of reason based? If it is on nature, then we are back in the old predicament of presupposing the goodness of nature. So it can only be reason itself in its purity which can teach us what is good. But reason in its purity is purely formal; it tells us only that in order to be rational our will must be of such a kind as to will what is in itself susceptible of being universal. In Kant's formula of the categorical imperative, we act in such a way that the maxim of our actions is susceptible of being given the form of a universal law. Now that means something very simple; it is the precise formulation of something very simple. Everyone acts on maxims whether he knows it or not and regardless of what it may be. Now Kant says that in order to distinguish between moral and immoral maxims, a simple experiment is possible: try to state this maxim in the form of a universal law, and then, Kant contends, we can see whether it is absurd. I am not now concerned with whether Kant's doctrine is tenable or not; I am only trying to reach the point where Hegel begins.

Now Hegel doesn't believe that Kant succeeded, but he asserts that Kant's beginning is the right beginning, You see, you have here as the ultimate fact, not reason in the sense of a faculty perceiving certain eternal relations or whatever, but "will." But will, however, does not mean desire. That is understood. Will means, really, that act in which I am willing. If I desire, it may very well be, and a matter of fact it is so, that I have not chosen the desire, yes? Something urges and pushes me, but it is not I that do this. Therefore, with will, I must have really chosen it, and I must have chosen it as something susceptible of universality. Only then do I will. Will can only will itself, Hegel says; the will as will is nothing but the choosing of will, i.e., of a universal rule of action. Kant drew one conclusion from this which Hegel does not deny: if this is the deepest in man, that on which his humanity depends, then the dignity of man consists alone in his thus willing, in willing strictly speaking. From this it follows however that, reversely, there is an essential dignity of man because man as man is capable of willing; and this is true of every man, and therefore freedom and equality of all men is implied in this notion of willing. And Hegel imputes, wrongly—but that is uninteresting and, really, also it is uninteresting for Hegel—that this Kantian notion of freedom was the motivation for the French Revolution, whereas it was really a much more old-fashioned notion of freedom which

animated the French people. That could easily be shown by a study of Rousseau. The Rousseauean concept of freedom is not the Kantian concept but rather a minor and purely antiquarian thing.

Now what Hegel says is this. Kant formulated it this way: there is only one natural right—natural right is not a native right; "a right congenital to man" would be a better translation—and that is the right to freedom. There is no other right. But this is of course a right which all men possess. And according to Kant and to Hegel, this includes the absolute impossibility of slavery, as well as equality of opportunity. That is implied in this formulation—whether rightly or wrongly, I am not discussing now. Hegel's point now is that these fundamental rights, "the real freedom" as he calls it, has nothing to do with what he calls "formal freedom." And this formal freedom is the assertion that from these fundamental rights—which of course must issue in action; the state must guarantee these rights and protect them, not merely assert them . . . From this real freedom, no conclusions can be drawn of a strictly political nature. By "strictly political nature," I mean the assertion that since every man possesses equal freedom, every man must have an equal say in the legislation. That, Hegel denies, and that in his view is the fundamental defect of the French Revolution and later on of liberalism, that it believes that direct and political consequences, consequences regarding legislation and participation in legislation, follow from this fundamental freedom and equality. Could you follow this?

Student: I thought I said that.

LS: Yes, but it was hard to recognize. It is possible that you understood it, but you didn't convey it, I believe. But I may be mistaken.

Student: But I thought that Hegel points out that every man does have a say in the legislation, in that the legislation is what every man is.

LS: Well, we can read that passage if you want to. Let us turn to that passage. You see, this notion of freedom which Hegel has, and which stems from Kant, plays a very great role in the development of—and today this notion of freedom is reposited in—existentialism. Existentialism can be said to be that form of the Kant-Hegelian philosophy of freedom which denies that universally valid consequences necessarily follow from this fundamental freedom.

Student: I was wondering: I haven't read Schopenhauer, but does he fit in here somewhere?

LS: No. Schopenhauer is far lower in rank; he can really not be compared with Hegel and Kant. That has nothing to do with this issue. Schopenhauer's political writings are absolutely poor—you know, the lowest stage, a somewhat ill-tempered bachelor who wants to be left alone and be protected against the unruly mob. That is more or less how—I exaggerate a bit, but it is really very uninteresting. Hegel was infinitely more penetrating in his analysis of political things, to say nothing of other matters.

Now I have frequently in my classes indicated the presence of this problem in the present day: Kant made this distinction between the "is" and the "ought" which is somehow underlying the fact-value distinction, but he did it in a different way. What Kant meant by this was that knowledge of the "is" is science, and an analysis of science leads to a fundamental freedom of the human mind: it is the human mind which "prescribes nature its laws." If you understand this basis of science—those fundamental acts of mind by virtue of which science is at all possible—then you are driven into a deeper stratum of these fundamental presuppositions, and that deeper stratum is moral freedom. So for Kant there is an absolutely inseparable connection between his so-called epistemology or analysis of science and his moral teaching.

That is today completely blurred in the teachings of positivism, but I believe it would come out if one raised certain critical questions. Let us assume that science is what the logical positivists say it is. Then the question is: Why is science a meaningful pursuit? Yes? According to the strict teaching, the positivists must say that the question of whether science is good or not good cannot be answered by reason because it is a value judgment. Then science itself, the whole thing, whether you accept it as a whole or reject it, is an act of radical choice. It is a value judgment; you cannot give any reason for it. Now the positivists will of course say that their psychology explains why certain people choose science and others, say, reactionaries and strong-headed fools, reject it. But that is not a good answer because this psychology is a part of science and it presupposes science. The question is: What is the status of this whole edifice? And then you come back to this one fact, the absolutely fundamental fact of a choice of rationality itself or its opposite; and this fundamental choice of rationality, by which man becomes what he is, is no longer by its nature explicable scientifically because the scientific explanation presupposes the choice of science. The fundamental phenomenon is an abysmal freedom! And this is what existentialism of today teaches, of course, and this is what is implied in Kant and Hegel, with the qualification that this abysmal freedom itself issues essentially in a rationally universally valid order. That is denied of course by present-day people. So this problem of freedom exists today, given the modern denial of the natural inclinations and a natural end for man.

Student: Does the modern existentialist deny rationality? Does he say that freedom has to be impulsive rather than rational?

LS: No, it cannot be.

Student: What is the decision based on?

LS: They must make an attempt to show that in one way or another this freedom, the realization of this absolutely subordinate character of the choice, gives you some indication, some directive. For example, in the case of Sartre it leads somehow to a liberal democracy and excludes communism. This much is clear. But whether that is enough is a very long question.

We must now turn to some details. This question about liberalism . . . What is it, more precisely? There was one point where you questioned what I said?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Then let us turn to page 444, in the German on page 923.

Student: "With the formal principle . . . the conservation of natural rights."

LS: Namely, that of conserving the natural rights. He is trying to restate here the Revolutionary principles. Yes?

Student: "But natural right is freedom . . . equality of rights before the law."

LS: Yes, that follows necessarily, because the right cannot be protected without laws. And secondly the right belongs equally to everyone; hence, equal protection by the laws.

Student: "A direct connection is manifest here . . . the concrete absolute substance—"[viii]

LS: Yes, this formula is insufficient, and Hegel says here that it does not yet have any content, it does not yet arrive at the concrete absolute substance of the universe.

Student: I wondered about the word "religion." Could you translate that as "morality" rather than . . .

LS: Yes, but we come to that in the last paragraph of the book. Let us postpone that. Let us turn to page 445, second paragraph.

Student: "That formal individual will . . . such as the social impulse—"[ix]

LS: Yes. You see that is the point. The "social impulse," the impulse toward sociality, was the old-fashioned Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine that man is by nature social, ordered toward sociality by nature and not by choice. Think of the modern contractual doctrines: free individuals choose society; there is not a natural urge which justifies that choice, no urge outside of their wills; the basis of the state is "will" alone. This is the meaning of the contractual doctrine, but Hegel says this is not enough. Yes?

Student: "the desire for security, for property . . . of that of truth, which needs to be distinguished from it."[x]

LS: In other words, the fact that I must be certain, otherwise there is no genuineness in the whole thing. Yes? If I agree to something which is proposed to me by an authority, I

[viii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 444.
[ix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 445.
[x] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 445-46.

do not have a subjective certainty of it. So subjective certainty must be the beginning. But subjective certainty can never be the whole; it must be subjective certainty of the objective truth. The two things must come together. Now this finds its political parallel in the "rights of individuals" as one kind of freedom, and also something else: the objective freedom. These two must come together. Go on.

Student: "This is a vast discovery in regard to . . . as exhibited in the affairs of the world."

LS: That is the difference between the Reformation and the Revolution, that penetrating of the worldly life and the giving of its character. Go on.

Student: "We should not, therefore, contradict the assertion . . . asserted itself against the existing right."

LS: Now what he means by this is something very simple. The French Revolutionaries were confronted by all sorts of positive law[s] of the old monarchy, and those claimed to be valid merely because they were positive laws. Against this, the Revolution asserted that in order to be law, the law must be rational—the mere fact that it has prescription on its side is irrelevant ultimately. This is the true but abstract demand of the Revolution. "Abstract" because in itself it leads simply to destruction, the destruction of everything positive. There must be a positive principle, and it is with this that we have to fight. Now let us see page 447, paragraph one.

Student: "A constitution, therefore, was established in harmony . . . centers in his head, i.e., in thought—"

LS: No! It has never been seen that man stands on his head. That is, Hegel makes this concession to the vulgar criticism of the Revolution: "Everything is upside down; men stood on their heads." But what does it mean to say that they stood on their heads and tried to build up reality according to their thoughts?

Student: "in thought, inspired by which he builds up the world . . . thought ought to govern spiritual reality."

LS: In other words, Anaxagoras had thought only of the heavens, so to speak, but the world of man, the world of society, "the spiritual reality," as Hegel calls it, should be governed by thought. That was the deed of the Revolution.

Student: "This was, accordingly, a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared—"

LS: "All thinking beings"! Edmund Burke was not a thinking being. Yes?

Student: "emotions of a lofty character stirred men's minds . . . between the divine and secular was now first accomplished."[xi]

LS: Now that is a reflection of Hegel's youthful enthusiasm for the French Revolution; and you see this is said as an old man. He does not completely reject this, that the principle of the French Revolution was the rational society. He fully agrees. And he claims that this was the first time that men attempted—not only individual thinkers, but the whole society—to establish a fully rational society. That is in Hegel opinion the eternal glory of 1789. This is important. This side of Hegel is less known than his so-called reactionism. But what was the limitation of the French Revolution? We cannot read the whole thing, but we must read page 447, last line, and page 448.

Student: "Laws of rationality, of intrinsic rights . . . the continuance of serfdom and slavery."[xii]

LS: Do you see the point? In other words, it must be reason alone, not feeling. A man can feel very happy as a slave, but that doesn't mean a thing. But whether he *should* be a slave or not can only be established by reason. That is the gist of the "rights of man."

Now the other point. I will translate: "The formal freedom is the making and execution of the laws. But this activity is government as such."[xiii] Now what Hegel developed, in the nexus, is that the French misconstrued this formal freedom, and that it is this freedom which is the whole problem, namely, that all members of society should have an equal say in the making of laws. In this respect Hegel agrees of course with Burke. Burke also admits the "rights of man," but he denies that any political consequences regarding the contribution of the individual citizen to the making of laws would follow from that.[xiv] Government has a principle of its own which is deeply connected with the "rights of man" but which is not identical with them. That is the point.

Student: That is why I say that he does accept this principle that all men have a say in the making of laws, because the laws are the essence of man.

LS: Yes, sure, but not that man should be completely self-centered individuals, thinking only of themselves and entering into the voting booths and that is that. As such they should not have a say according to Hegel because they would not think of the common good. It is "I" as a responsible and reasonable human being that should have a say in the making of laws.

Student: But isn't this the "end" of man?

LS: Yes, but it is not possible from Hegel's point of view that this can be actualized democratically. This can only be actualized if the government has a power of its own

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[xi] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 447.
[xii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 447-48.
[xiii] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 927.
[xiv] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 149-50.

which is not derivative from the explicit will of the individual. That is what he calls atomism, the attempt to compose the general will through the wills of the many. This goes back to the complicated discussions in Rousseau's *Social Contract,* where Rousseau has the greatest difficulty to say that the general will can be the majority will. There is a real difficulty here, without any question. Why should the general will not be expressed in a given situation much more by a tiny minority than by the large majority? That is the difficulty. And for Hegel the answer is a certain kind of monarchy, as we shall see later.

Now let us turn to another point that will illustrate Hegel's solution—what he says about the July Revolution. That is on page 45l, bottom.

Student: "A fifteen year farce was played. For although the *Charte*—"

LS: The *Charte* was the constitution of the Restoration. Yes?

Student: "was the standard under which all were enrolled . . . [a weary heart]—"

LS: By the way, that very heart is Hegel's heart.

Student: "there remains on the one hand that rupture which the Catholic . . . in their individual capacity, should rule."

LS: That is of course the principle of liberalism: that all citizens should have the vote and, ideally, one man, one vote. That is what Hegel objects to. Yes?

Student: "or, at any rate, take part in the government . . . sets up in opposition to all this the atomistic principle."[xv]

LS: The "atomistic principle" means that what is now ruling is a democracy of course, in that individual citizens have a say in the government without undergoing a conversion from a self-seeking man to a public-spirited man. The Rousseauean construction was based on the premise that there is a device, a gimmick, for transforming the individual self-seeker into a public-spirited citizen. That is in a way the secret of the *Social Contract*, and that is, for example, that I, as a selfish creature, don't want to pay taxes, but I can never say this in the town meeting because people at the town meeting are not interested in what I "will" but only in proposals of law. So I cannot say that I do not want taxes but only that there ought to be a law that no one should pay taxes, and then I come to my senses. That is how Rousseau tried to solve the problem: the fact that all wills can be expressed only in the form of a general will which equally applies to all quasi-purifies me of selfishness. That this works well in such wonderfully clear cases is obvious, but it does not work equally well in more subtle cases, as you doubtless know. And if the Rousseauean solution is not sufficient, then you have a situation of the mere self-seeker, of the totality of self-seekers determining the common good, and that is absurd from Hegel's point of view. In practice it doesn't work quite that way, that is true; but theoretically we can say that we don't have a real solution to this problem. There are

[xv] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 451-52.

people who say that the solution consists in an electoral apathy. I have heard that. But that is certainly a very strange solution, that universal suffrage should be guaranteed by law in order not to be used. That is a kind of satire on democracy rather than a solution to the problem of democracy. You know this thesis has been propounded?[xvi] Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Well, every man with a little experience knows that there are many laws where you can say you can do it this way and that way. That is uninteresting. But important questions there may very well be [where], in spite of human nescience and unawareness of complications, [there is] only one proposal which is sound but most unpopular.

Student: That may be, but I think that in the most important things . . .

LS: But that is what Hegel is thinking of. Hegel is thinking of this point that the common good, that is to say the long-range good of everyone, or at least of every family if not of every individual, might require things which would [be] wholly unpopular, and that the state cannot exist if no provision is made for that. The simple example which is at our doorstep is the demobilization of this country in 1945. Walter Lippmann wrote a book on this problem which is in the first part quite convincing, I believe.[xvii] Yes?

Student: But it is so hard to determine whether that in itself is such a wrong decision. We are only five years away from . . .

LS: Well, everyone who is not a communist, I believe. That is different, you must admit that, that if you want to preserve freedom in the West, there was a time when you could with ease have secured it. Today it can, to put it mildly, no longer be secured with any ease.

Student: But that might have led to all kinds of dire consequences. How far . . .

LS: That goes beyond human responsibility altogether, and no one can be praised or blamed for things which no sensible person could have foreseen at the time.

Student: But there is so much that sensible people can't foresee . . .

LS: But look for a moment. In the light of your private life, what conclusions would follow if you made your distinction between your wise and your unwise decisions on the basis of this kind of inescapable darkness of the future. All of our decisions must be based on what can be known. That by accident a most foolish action might lead to happiness, we all know. But still we would never call such an action a wise action; we would simply call it luck. And that is beyond any human praise or blame. But let us go on.

[xvi] Strauss may have in mind Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942) or Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (1956).

[xvii] Strauss probably has in mind Walter Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims* (Boston: Little Brown, 1944).

Student: "Liberalism sets up in opposition to all this the atomic . . . and branded as displays of arbitrary power—"

LS: No! Hegel says they are particular wills, hence arbitrary. If it is only the will of party as party, it has no moral authority for the others.

Student: "the will of the many expels the Ministry from power . . . and whose solution it has to work out in the future."[xviii]

LS: In other words, Hegel rejects the liberal solution. The last remark must not be understood to mean that there is still an unsolved problem in the decisive respect, that it is not yet the end of history. It simply means that in the Catholic countries, where the principle of the sound solution is not known, there has to be found a way between liberalism and Catholicism which they have not yet found. In the Protestant countries, especially blessed Prussia, the situation is according to Hegel different.

There are many more passages which we should consider. Let us read the last passage of the book, in answer to the question you raised before.

Student: "That the history of the world, with its always changing scenes . . . not only not without God, but is essentially His work."[xix]

LS: It is more precise in the German: "The mind is only that to which it makes itself. Therefore, it is necessary that the mind presupposes itself."[xx] Now what does this mean? Why is it necessary that the mind presupposes itself? Well, if the mind were only that which it makes itself, the mind would simply be its own product. But it is not simply its own product. The fact that there is the possibility of mind is not the work of mind, i.e., of human mind. In other words, a merely human philosophy which does not refer to the absolute or, as Hegel calls it, "the God," is impossible. That is what he means. Therefore, in more concrete terms, nature must be of a particular character if there is to be human life and, in particular, the life of the mind. And the human mind cannot guarantee the availability of that nature, and therefore there must be something else which guarantees it, a character of the whole. That is what Hegel means by the "world mind" which becomes fully conscious of itself in man, but which is not simply the work of man. One can say the process by which it makes itself conscious is the work of man, but that the possibility exists is not his work. In other words, Hegel's doctrine stands and falls with his metaphysics, there is no question about that. Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

[xviii] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 452.
[xix] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 457. This is the final paragraph of the book.
[xx] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 938.

LS: Yes, you can put it that way, but the point is that Hegel's philosophy of history, or his thesis of the mind altogether, is not self-contained. It requires his philosophy of nature, and his logic, and so on—[xxi]

[1] Deleted "interpolation"

[xxi] The transcriber notes that there was a break in the tape at this point.